少年サンデーコミックス
Scomics

FROM THE PAGES
OF THE ACCLAIMED
MILITARY MANGA SERIES!

THE COCKPIT
THE GERMAN STORIES

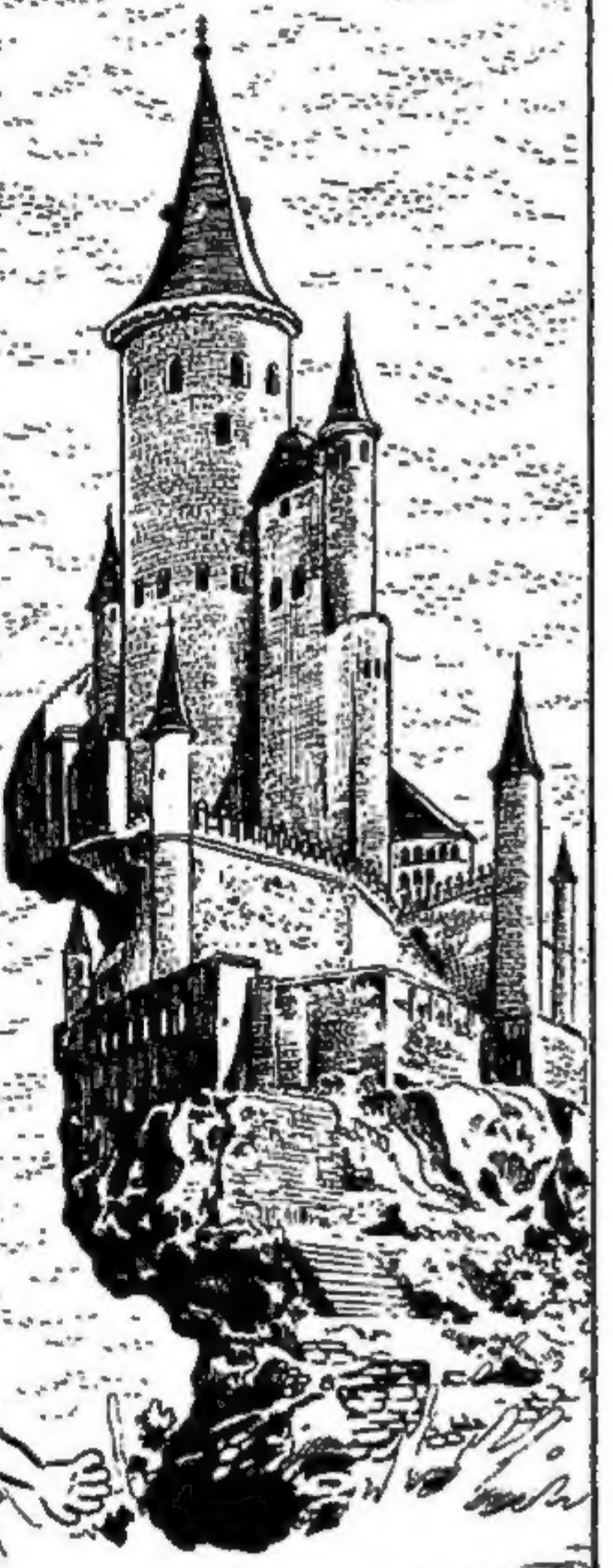
松本零士
LEIJI MATSUMOTO

NOTICE!

Japanese comics or *manga* are read from right to left across the page instead of left to right. Also, if your reader supports Japanese *manga* format (back to front instead of front to back) then set it so for easier reading. Thanks!

THE COCKPIT

THE GERMAN STORIES



松本零士

BY/L・MATSUMOTO

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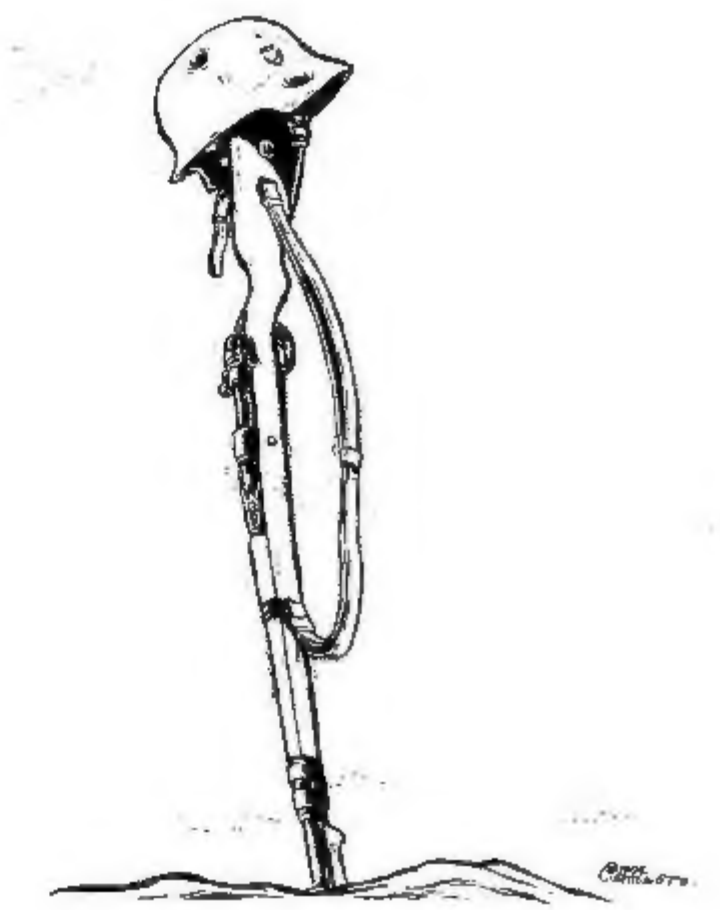
INTRODUCTION

Hi! I'm Richard Mandel. You've probably heard of me before with regards to my involvement on the fan end of what we call the "Leijiverse," that body of interrelated works created by the late great Leiji Matsumoto (1938-2023). If you haven't then don't worry about it. I won't. I have no ego to bruise (smile). Anyhow I'm currently hard at work doing the first-ever English adaptation of Matsumoto's complete *Battlefield* series of military-themed manga. Now that the first part of that is done, being that nine volume series known as *The Cockpit* that kicked the whole thing off, I decided to take a brief pause to address something I know a lot of my fellow Leijiverse fans have wanted for a long time. "What's that?" you ask. Why, only the German stories that appear in *The Cockpit* and nothing else. There's a lot of reasons for that and I'm sure you and the rest of my fellow Leijiverse fans will have fun discussing and debating that on your own. Me, I'm not going to get involved other than to address this desire, now that I'm able to do so. That's what this special release is all about.

Here in this single volume are all of the German stories that first appeared in the original nine volume *tankoban* printing of *The Cockpit* so long ago. From the widely acclaimed "My Youth in Arcadia" to the short but powerful "No Cicadas in the Stratosphere," from fan favorites such as "The Black Knight of Berlin" to more obscure tales such as "The Twin Engined Knight" and "Stuka at Night," they're all here in one single "big" (*bunkoban*) collection for all of you to enjoy. That's not all. I've also included three extra bonus German tales by Matsumoto from other sources to round out this collection. How's that for service, fellow fans?

Enjoy!

R.M.



Dies sind die Geschichten von Männern, Frauen, und den Maschines des Krieges.

(These are the stories of men, women, and the machines of war.)

LEIJI
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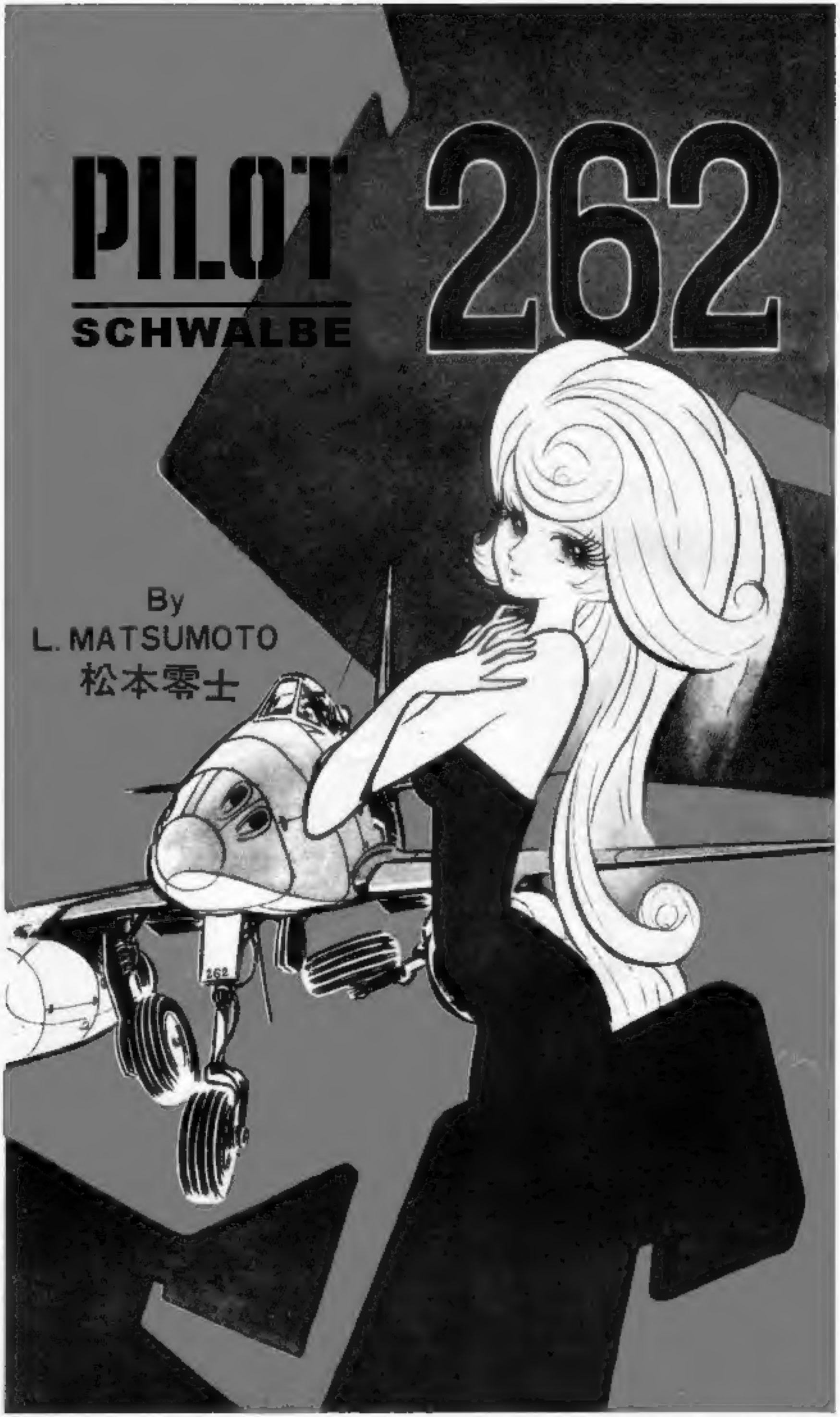
PRESENTS

THE COCKPIT

PILOT 262

SCHWALBE



By
L. MATSUMOTO
松本零士

BY THAT TIME IN A CAREER THAT INCLUDED THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN AND NORTH AFRICA, I WAS AND ACE WITH 272 CONFIRMED ENEMY KILLS.

... IN MY ME-262 "SCHWALBE." THAT WAS THE WORLD'S FIRST JET FIGHTER, IN CASE YOU DIDN'T KNOW.

MY NAME IS WALTER VON HARLOCK.

ON MAY 7, 1945, I WAS FLYING ABOVE SALZBURG ...

I ALSO HAD THE DISTINCTION OF NEVER HAVING BEEN SHOT DOWN IN ALL OF THAT TIME.

BY THAT TIME I HAD RISEN TO THE RANK OF MAJOR IN THE LUFTWAFFE.

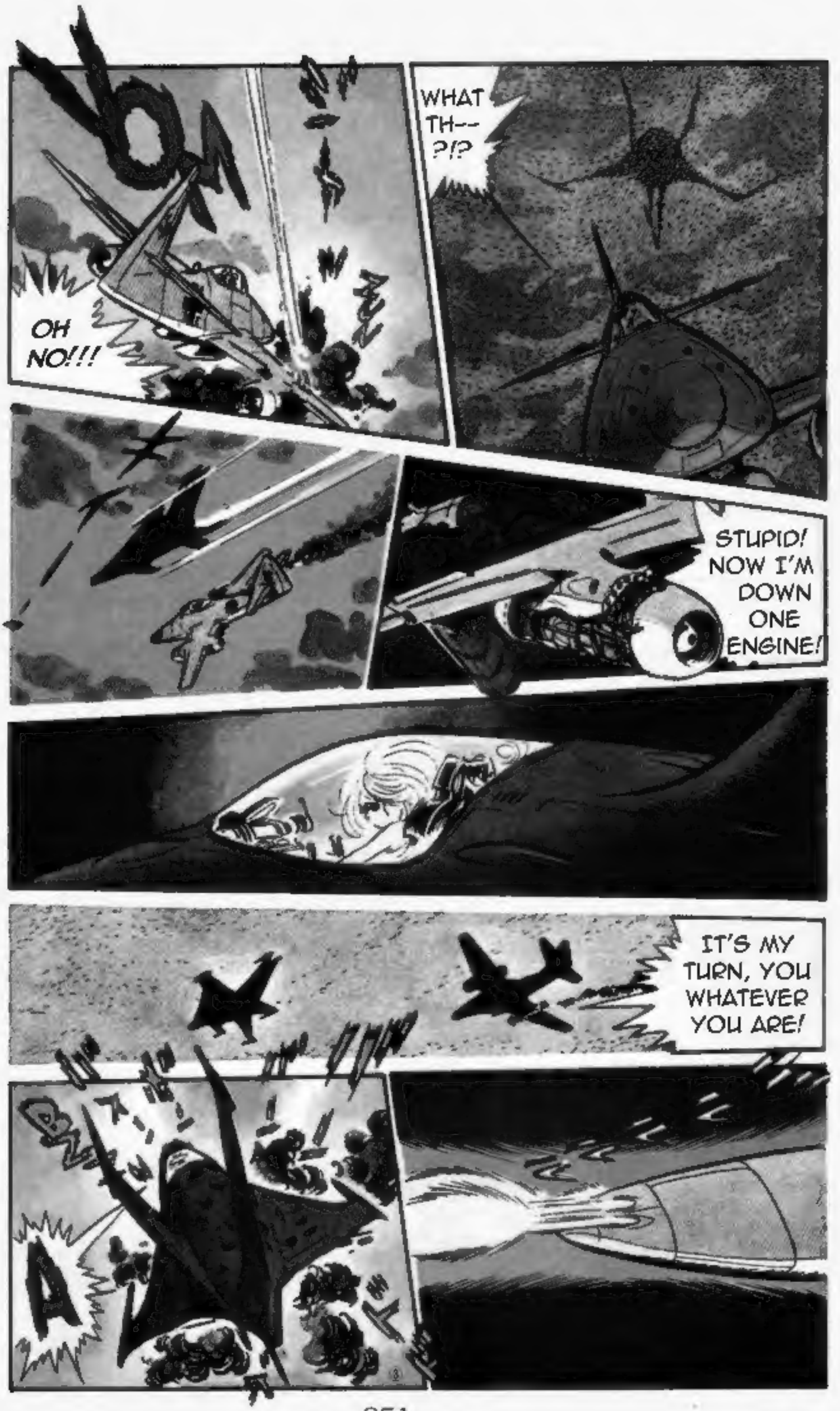
FROM WHERE DID THIS FOG COME? AND WHAT'S WITH THE RADIO?

ON THAT DAY I REMEMBER BEING VERY LONELY, AS I FLEW ALONE IN THE SKY.

I GET STATIC ON ALL BANDS! WHAT IN THE WORLD COULD CAUSE THIS?

SLOWLY THE FOG BEGAN TO CLEAR ... AND THAT'S WHEN IT HAPPENED.

I WOULD HAVE WELCOMED AN ENEMY FOR COMPANY.


WHAT TH--?!?
OH NO!!!
STUPID! NOW I'M DOWN ONE ENGINE!
IT'S MY TURN, YOU WHATEVER YOU ARE!

WHAT IS THIS PLACE?!?

NOTHING BELOW LOOKS FAMILIAR! WHERE AM I?

I'M LUCKY IT DIDN'T FALL OFF BACK THERE!

I'D BETTER FIND A PLACE TO LAND AND SEE TO THIS ENGINE!

THAT STRANGE PLANE! MAYBE ....

WHERE THE FUCK AM I?

YELLOW GRASS AND ROCK HARD SOIL.

GODDAMNIT, IT'S MORE OF A MESS THAN I KNEW.

IF THE PILOT ...

GONE!... AND THIS IS NO ORDINARY PLANE.

WHAT MAKES IT GO?

WE DON'T HAVE ANY-THING LIKE THIS.

NOR DOES JAPAN OR EVEN THE ALLIES. THIS IS WAY AHEAD OF US.

GOT YOU AT LAST!

WITHOUT THIS THE LIGHT OF THE MOON WILL KILL YOU!

WHY WAIT? LET'S SHOOT HER NOW! ALL REBELS DESERVE TO DIE!

YOU COWARDS! YOU AND YOUR SICK RULERS BOTH!!!

BAM! BAM! BAM!

BUT BEFORE THAT ... !

WHO AND WHAT ARE YOU?

YOU'RE FROM THAT STRANGE SHIP!

NO WONDER YOU LOOK AND SOUND DIFFERENT, NOT TO MENTION YOUR SHIP!

ISN'T THAT OBVI-OUS?!

GERMANY! THE SECOND WORLD WAR!

MAJOR HARLOCK, LUFT-WAFFE.

HOW YOU GOT HERE I DON'T KNOW, BUT YOU'VE TRADED ONE WAR FOR ANOTHER.

I'M NEYA AND THIS IS YOUR FUTURE.

PLEASE ... WHO ARE YOU?

MY CLOTHES ARE RUINED.

I'M A REBEL AGAINST THE NEW WORLD ORDER.

WHO WERE THEY AND WHY WERE THEY AFTER YOU?

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU GOT HERE BUT LET ME SHOW MY GRATITUDE ...

TO KEEP US TYPES DOCILE WE'RE DESIGNED TO DIE FROM TOO MUCH MOON-LIGHT.

I WAS A SOCILATOR, GENETICALLY MODDED FOR MY TASK.

AAHH ....

THAT SOUND! IT'S THEIR SHIPS!

IT'S THE FINAL BATTLE.

NOTE - IN THE ORIGINAL NEYA TELLS HARLOCK THAT THE NEW WORLD ORDER'S SHIPS ARE ARMED WITH ANTI-PROTON BOMBS AND THAT SHE FULLY EXPECTS THIS THIS ATTACK TO DESTROY HER WORLD. I HAD TO LEAVE THIS OUT DUE TO LACK OF SPACE IN THE AVAILABLE TEXT BUBBLES. (P.M.)

MY LAST GIFT TO MY SAVIOR.

I'LL STRIP WHAT I NEED FROM THEIR SHIPS, RIG A DEVICE ..

WE'VE GOT TO SEND YOU BACK.

LATER

IT'S JUST LIKE NEW! I--

NEYA!!

I WILL NEVER FORGET YOU.

... -OCK, WHERE ARE YOU? THIS IS LUFTWAFFE CONTROL, OVER!

GOODBYE, NEYA KIMIGA. GOODBYE.

I HOPE THIS THING SHE MADE WORKS!

I AM WALTER VON HARLOCK, AND ON MAY 7, 1945, I WAS ... ... ELSEWHERE.

I NEVER DID SEE THE END OF THEIR WAR, BUT I SAW THE END OF MINE.

DAS ENDE

NOTE - IN THE ORIGINAL AND AFTER HE RETURNS TO HIS OWN TIME, HARLOCK LOOKS AT THE MOON AND WONDERS IF NEYA'S WORLD LOOKED LIKE THAT AFTER ITS FINAL END

LEIJI
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THE COCKPIT

SPEED 20 KNOTS, BEARING 20 DEGREES STARBOARD, RANGE 2000 METERS. SHIP TYPE UNABLE TO DETERMINE DUE TO VIOLENCE OF AURORA.

FIRE TUBE ONE! FIRE TUBE TWO!

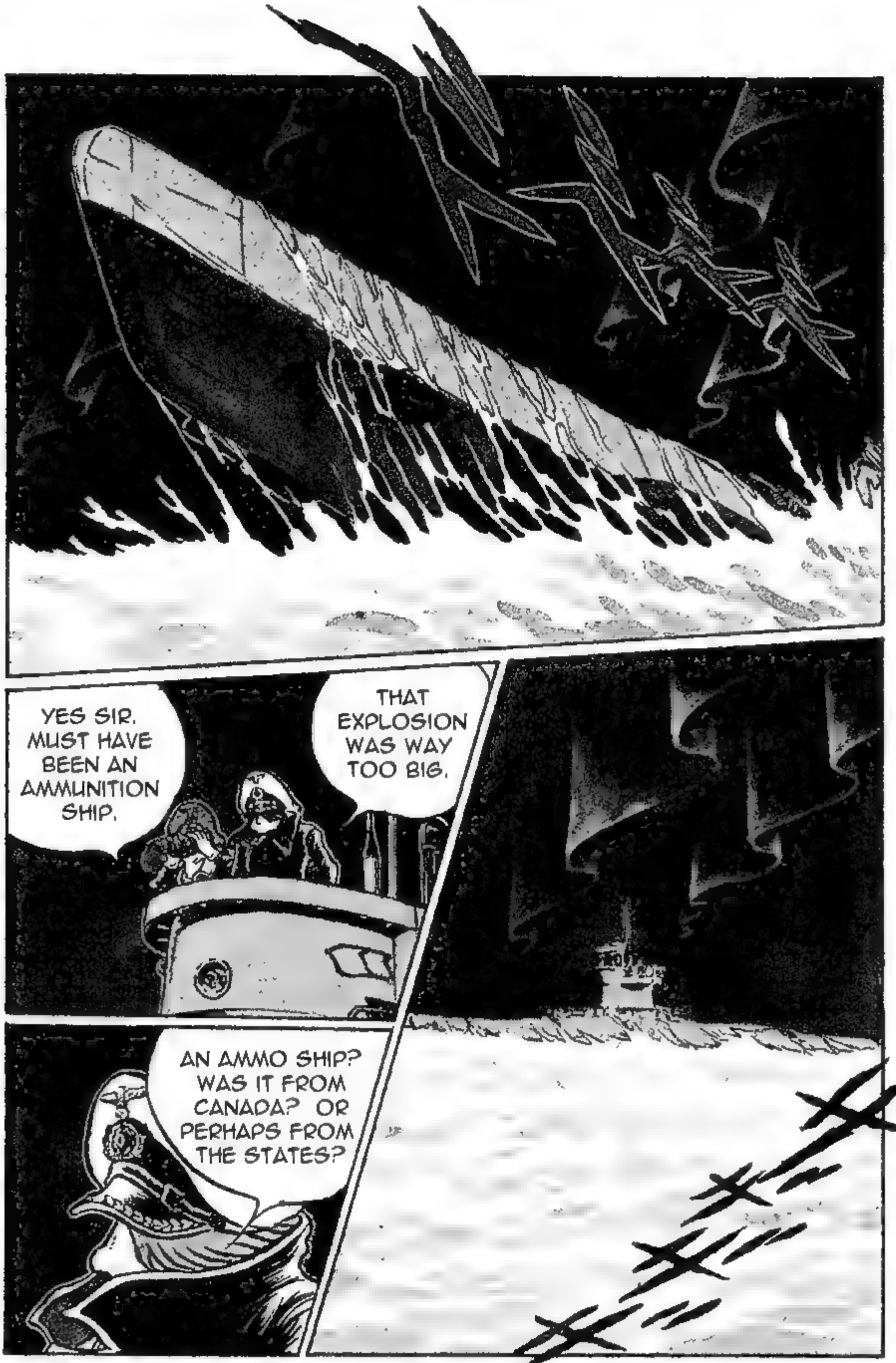
COUNTING ... TEN ... NINE ... EIGHT ... SEVEN ...

... FOUR ... THREE ... TWO ... ONE ...

BOTH FISH RUNNING TRUE. SIX ... FIVE ...

KA-BA-WHOOM-BOOM!!!

THE FANGS OF AN AURORA


THAT EXPLOSION WAS WAY TOO BIG.
YES SIR. MUST HAVE BEEN AN AMMUNITION SHIP.
AN AMMO SHIP? WAS IT FROM CANADA? OR PERHAPS FROM THE STATES?

I BELIEVE YOU'RE RIGHT. AN AMMUNITION SHIP. TOO BAD WE BLEW IT TO PIECES. THERE'S NO SURE WAY TO CONFIRM IT OR ITS IDENTITY NOW.

I SMELL CORDITE AND GUN-POWDER.

INDEED.

I DON'T SEE ANY SURVIVORS, SIR. NOT THAT THEY'D LAST LONG IN THIS FREEZING WATER.

THEY'VE GOT THE EASIER BUT LONGER ROUTE. WE HAVE THE SHORTER BUT FAR HARDER ROUTE: A STRAIGHT SHOT UNDER THE ARCTIC ICECAP

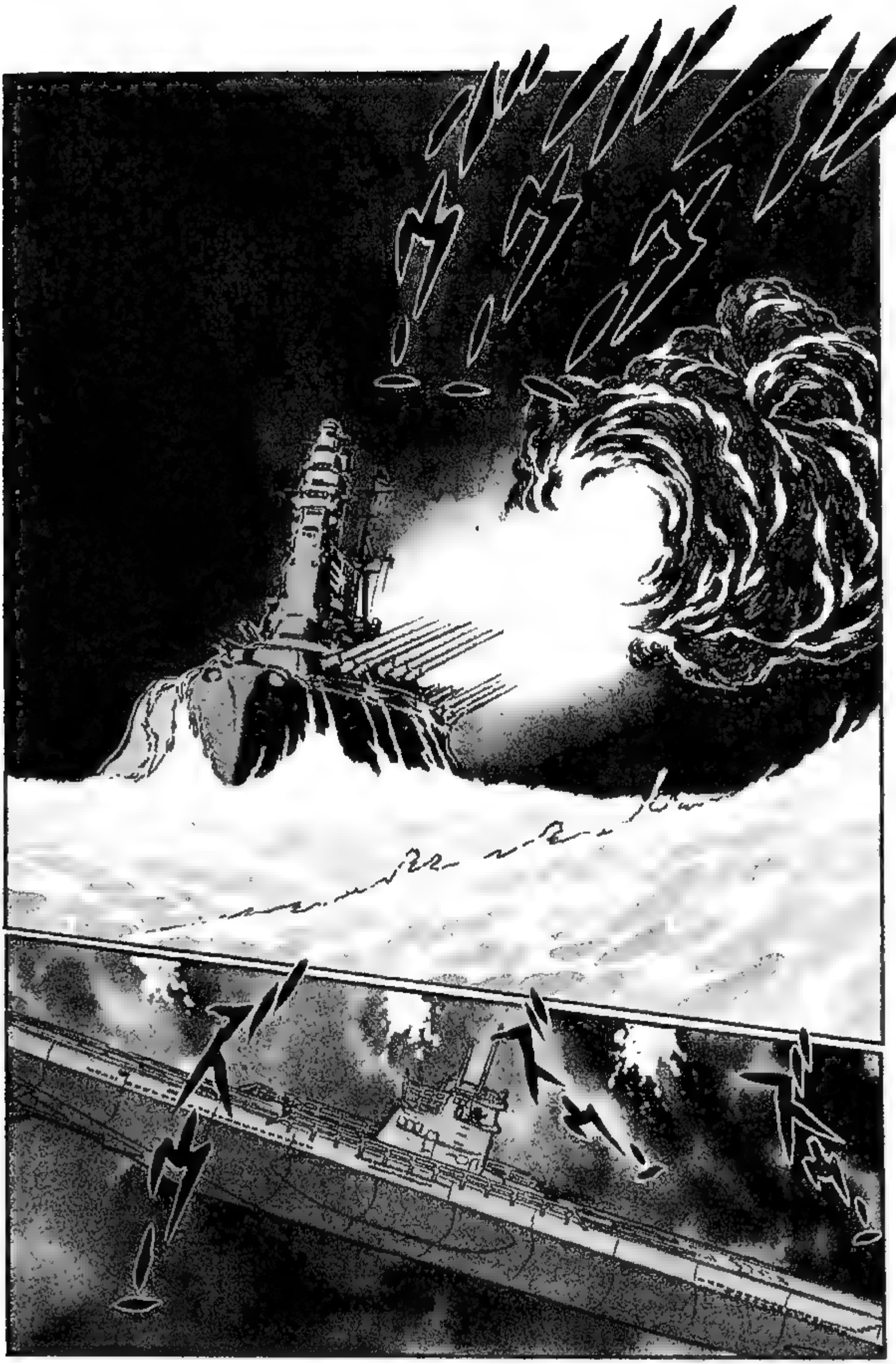
WE'LL CONTINUE WITH OUR MISSION TO REACH JAPAN.

THERE'S ALSO THAT AMMO SHIP BEING OUT HERE. THAT MEANS BRITISH WARSHIPS ARE PROBABLY IN THE AREA.

THE ROYAL NAVY IS STRETCHED AROUND THE WORLD, FROM THE ARCTIC TO THE INDIAN OCEAN AND FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE PACIFIC. IF WE CAN SLIP PAST THEIR NORTHERNMOST PATROLS THEN WE'LL BE IN THE CLEAR.

(*) *HAUPTMAN OBERLEUTNANT* - DE. LIT. "CAPTAIN FIRST LIEUTENANT." A U-BOAT COMMANDER WAS ADDRESSED BY BOTH POSITION (CAPTAIN) AND RANK (IN THIS CASE FIRST LIEUTENANT) ON FORMAL OCCASIONS. MR. KREUZ IS JOKING WITH HIS CAPTAIN AND DRIESE KNOWS IT.

BUT IF THEY'RE ON SCHEDULE THEY'RE AROUND THE CAPE AND IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, SIR.
NOT SINCE YESTERDAY MORNING, SIR.
HAVE YOU HEARD FROM U-142 LATELY?
JA WOHL, , HAUPTMAN ' OBERLEUTNANT* DRIESE! > CHUCKLE <
"IF" .... THAT'S A MIGHTY BIG WORD, MR. KREUZ.
IT'S A BIG ONE, SIR! SOUNDS LIKE A BATTLESHIP! IT'S CLOSING FAST!! I THINK IT'S SIGHTED US, SIR!!!
CAPTAIN! RADAR CONTACT, EXTREME RANGE!
BATTLE ALERT! CRASH DIVE!!



TO BE THAT BIG AND BE ABLE TO UNLOAD THAT MUCH FIREPOWER SO ACCURATELY AND FROM SO FAR AWAY ...

IT WAS!

I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU FIRST DETECTED THAT BIG CONTACT AT EXTREME RANGE!

WE'RE DEALING WITH A BATTLESHIP, MEN! ITS ALSO A NEW ONE WITH THE LATEST LARGE NAVAL RIFLES AND FIRE CONTROL RADAR!

ONLY A MODERN BATTLESHIP COULD LAND THAT SIZE OF SALVO SO ACCURATELY!

IT'S HAPPENED BEFORE.

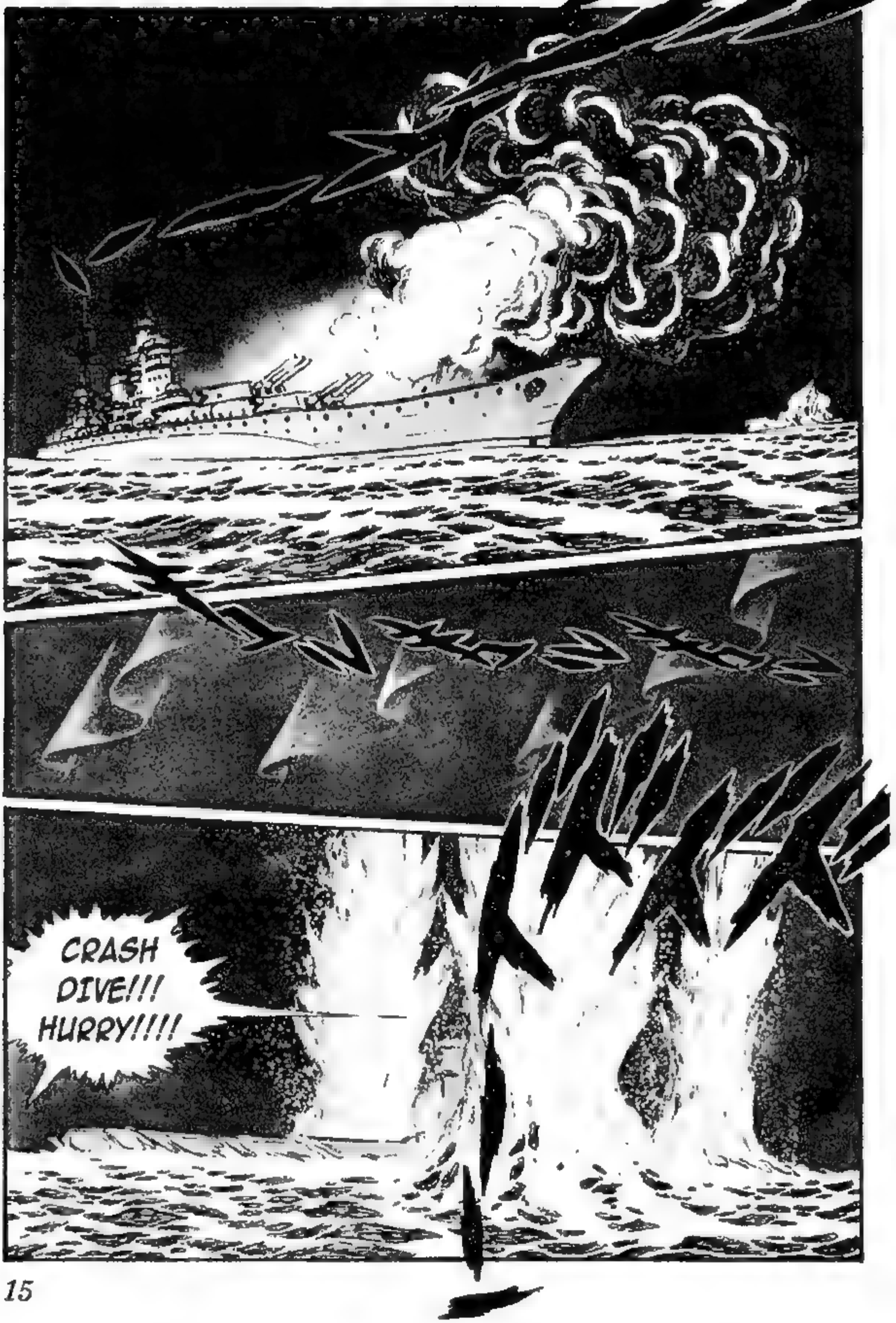
A BATTLESHIP FIGHTING A SUBMARINE? THAT'S A DESTROYER'S JOB!

BUT SIR, AND BEGGING YOUR PARDON, BUT THE IDEA IS RIDICULOUS!

FROM WHERE DID THIS ONE COME? FURTHERMORE, WHAT'S IT DOING HERE IN OUR WAY?

HMS DREADNOUGHT, 1915. DURING WORLD WAR I SHE MADE HISTORY BY BEING THE ONLY BATTLESHIP TO DATE TO SINK A SUBMARINE. THAT WAS THEN, THOUGH, AND THIS IS NOW, AND WE KNOW WHERE ALL THE MODERN BRITISH BATTLESHIPS ARE IN THE WAR.

MAYBE HE'D LIKE TO PLAY TAG, SURFACE AND RADAR REPORT!
ICE FLOES, SIR!
RADAR GUIDED BARRAGE, ALL GUNS!
RADAR CONTACT! BEARING, 30 DEGREES! DISTANCE, 35,000 METERS! IT'S THAT SUB AGAIN!


CRASH
DIVE!!!
HURRY!!!!

IS THERE STILL ANY DOUBT THAT WE HAVE A BRITISH BATTLESHIP ON OUR TAIL?

HE'S STILL THERE, SIR AT THE EDGE OF THE ICE.

AND THAT NEW RADAR IS FINE TUNED ENOUGH TO TRACK A SURFACED SUB. SONAR!

... THEN HE'S GOING TO SINK US.

GENTLEMEN, THE CAPABILITIES OF THAT NEW BRITISH BATTLESHIP MEANS WE CAN'T SURFACE ANYWHERE CLOSE TO HIM. IF WE DO ...

NOW THEY'RE PUTTING ASDIC* ON ALL OF THEIR SMALL WARSHIPS AND RADAR ON EVERYTHING. MAKES FOR A FAR MORE COMPLICATED WAR. STILL, IT'S THE WAR WE'VE FIGHTING ...

OH, FOR THE OLD DAYS WHEN ALL WE NEEDED TO BEAT THE ENEMY WAS A GOOD BOAT AND OUR SNORKEL TO KEEP THE DIESELS CHARGED WHILE UNDERWATER!

... ONLY I NEVER EXPECTED TO HAVE TO FIGHT A BATTLESHIP IN A SUBMARINE!

(*) ASDIC - THE OLDER BRITISH TERM FOR SONAR

LUCK OF THE DRAW, MR. BARTON. BESIDES, AND IF OUR INTELLIGENCE IS RIGHT, I'VE DEALT WITH THIS FELLOW BEFORE. HE WON'T ESCAPE ME AGAIN.
WHAT I'D GIVE FOR SOME DEPTH CHARGES!
DID YOU KNOW, MR. BARTON, THAT DRIESE HAS OVER 200,000* TONS OF ALLIED SHIPS SUNK TO HIS CREDIT? AND THAT 1/4 OF THOSE WERE WARSHIPS?
I TANGLED WITH HIM WHEN I WAS IN COMMAND OF THE DESTROYER BARRACUDA*.
CAPTAIN DEWALT VON DRIESE. HE'S ONE OF THEIR BEST.

(*) I CHANGED BOTH OF THESE IN MY ENGLISH ADAPTATION FOR GREATER REALISM. IN THE ORIGINAL HMS BARRACUDA WAS THE NAME OF THE BRITISH BATTLESHIP FEATURED IN THE STORY, BUT THE BRITISH NEVER NAMED BATTLESHIPS AFTER FISH. ALSO, THE ORIGINAL CREDITED DRIESE WITH OVER 600,000 TONS OF SHIPS SUNK. THE BEST GERMAN U-BOAT ACE OF THE WAR IN REAL LIFE, OTTO KRESCHMER, SANK ONLY 273,043 TONS TOTAL. (R.M.)

BUT DIDN'T YOU SINK 22 U-BOATS BEFORE YOU WERE PROMOTED TO COMMAND A CRUISER, SIR? YOU'RE JUST AS GOOD!

I'VE HEARD OF HIM, SIR. A BRAVE AND DARING MAN BY ALL ACCOUNTS.

I STARTED THE WAR AS THE COMMANDER OF A DESTROYER SQUADRON.

IT'S IRONIC THAT MY FIRST SEA BATTLE WITH MY NEW COMMAND IS AGINST ONE OF MY MOST RESPECTED FOES FROM EARLY IN THE WAR!

NOW I COMMAND A BATTLESHIP! MY CAREER DREAM ...

I DON'T KNOW, SIR. THE OLD DREADNOUGHT PULLED IT OFF DURING THE FIRST WAR.

BUT TO FIGHT A SUBMARINE WITH A BATTLESHIP OF ALL THINGS ... AS I SAID, LUCK OF THE DRAW.

FORTUNATELY WE HAVE RADAR RANGEFINDING FOR OUR BIG GUNS, SO THERE'LL BE NO NEED FOR THAT.

SHE DID IT BY RAMMING IT, MR. BARTON. DRIESE IS TOO GOOD A SKIPPER TO EVER LET US GET THAT CLOSE.

I WILL GET YOU, DRIESE. YOU'RE NOT ESCAPING ME THIS TIME!

THIS IS PART OF OUR JOB. BY DESTROYING DRIESE, WE HELP CRIPPLE THE GERMANS LONG TERM.

WE WERE VERY FORTUNATE TO BE AT THE RIGHT PLACE AND AT THE RIGHT TIME TO CUT HIM OFF.

I HAVE TO HAND IT TO DOENITZ* FOR BEING VERY CRAFTY, SENDING THAT OTHER U-BOAT AROUND AFRICA IN A EFFORT TO TRY DISTRACTING US FROM DRIESE!

WHY HE'S SENT BOTH OF THEN TO JAPAN WE DON'T KNOW. SOME FORM OF TECHNOLOGY EXCHANGE OR THE LIKE, NO DOUBT. WHAT HE DIDN'T COUNT ON WAS US COMING THE OTHER WAY. REMIND ME TO THANK THE CANADIANS FOR THAT.

10 DEGREES TO STARBOARD, RANGE 10,000 METERS, SIR.

WHERE?

SIR, THE U-BOAT IS STARTING TO MOVE IN A ZIG-ZAG PATTERN.

(*) M-SAN'S STORY MAY HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY THE YANAGI MISSIONS OF THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE NAVY DURING THE WAR AND THE STORY OF U-234'S ATTEMPT TO REACH JAPAN WITH GERMAN HIGH TECH AND A SHIPMENT OF URANIUM OXIDE FOR ATOMIC RESEARCH NEAR ITS END. IT'S ALSO A LITTLE KNOWN FACT THAT A SMALL NUMBER OF GERMAN U-BOATS OPERATED IN THE PACIFIC DURING THE WAR. LOOK UP THE MONSUN GRUPPE FOR MORE INFO!

ALL HANDS TO BATTLE STATIONS! WE'RE GOING AFTER THEM AND DAMN THE ICE!
FLANK SPEED, MR. BARTON!
THOUGHT YOU COULD HIDE FROM ME IN THERE, DIDN'T YOU DRIESE? YOU CAN'T ...
ABOVE OR BELOW THE SURFACE, THERE'S NO PLACE YOU CAN HIDE! THIS TIME, DRIESE, YOU'RE MINE!!
... BECAUSE I'VE GOT SOMETHING NO BATTLESHIP HAS EVER BEEN FITTED WITH BEFORE! I'VE GOT ASDIC, AND I CAN FIND YOU ANYWHERE!!

HHRROONNGGG!

THERE IS NOW. HE CAN FIND US ABOVE WITH HIS RADAR OR BELOW WITH ASDIC.

ASDIC?!?!! BUT THERE'S NEVER BEEN A BATTLESHIP WITH ASIDC!!!

45,000 TONS, NINE 16-INCH GUNS*, RADAR, ASDIC, FAST AS HELL ... I'D SAY IT'S A G3 TYPE BATTLECRUISER. YOU KNOW, THE ONES THAT SUPPOSEDLY WERE NEVER BUILT?

LET'S RISK A LOOK. HMM. RESEMBLES THE NELSON CLASS OVERALL.

HHRROONNGGG!

THAT CAPTAIN IS PLAYING FOR KEEPS.

HHRROONNGGG!

HHRROONNGGG!

SIR, ENEMY CLOSING FAST!

(*) MY AUTOTRANSLATOR SOFTWARE SAYS 15-INCH GUNS BUT THIS IS EITHER AN ERROR OR AN UNINTENDED GOOF ON M-SAN'S PART. ALL OF THE OTHER STATS HE GIVES FOR THE "BRITISH BATTLESHIP" IN HIS STORY FIT THE UNBUILT G3 TYPE BATTLECRUISERS OF 1921, SAVE FOR THE ADDITION OF ASDIC FOR HIS TALE. IRONICALLY THE G3S PROBABLY WOULD HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED "FAST BATTLESHIPS" ONCE THAT TERM CAME INTO BEING AND GIVEN THEIR STATS. THIS MAY BE WHY M-SAN CALLS THIS A BATTLESHIP IN HIS STORY.

RIG FOR SILENT RUNNING!

LOWER THE SCOPE! DOWN TO TWENTY METERS!

THIS BRITISH CAPTAIN IS A VERY DETERMINED OPPONENT. NO ... A FORMIDABLE ONE. COULD IT BE ...?

COULD IT BE THAT HE IS IN COMMAND OF THIS NEW BRITISH BATTLESHIP? IF HE IS .... !!

THERE'S ONLY ONE BRITISH CAPTAIN WHO EVER CAME CLOSE TO DEFEATING ME. CAPTAIN RICHARD OF THE BARRACUDA!

BELOW US?! THAT CAN'T BE! THIS IS THE ARCTIC! ARE YOU SURE, AND HOW FAR BELOW?

SIR! IT SOUNDS LIKE THEIR ASDIC IS HITTING BOTTOM BELOW US!

I'M SURE, SIR. IT'S HITTING WHAT SOUNDS LIKE THE SEA BOTTOM AT 400 METERS!

I'VE GOT IT! I KNOW WHAT IT IS! REST EASY, IT'S NOT A FALSE READING. IT SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN DISCOVERED ONLY RECENTLY.

MAYBE THAT'S WHY YOU CAN'T HIT US, RICHARD. YOUR ASDIC IS GETTING A BOUNCEBACK FROM THIS ....

THEIR OWN SUBS WERE HAVING THE SAME PROBLEM DUE TO A NATURALLY OCCURING LAYER IN THE OCEAN BETWEEN 300 AND 450 METERS DOWN THAT REFLECTS SOUND

OUR SPIES LEARNED OF SOMETHING THE AMERICANS FOUND OUT ABOUT LAST YEAR, SOMETHING THEY CALL THE ECR LAYER.

FROM WHAT I READ AND UNDER THE RIGHT CONDITIONS THEY COULD CONTACT THEIR SUBS HALFWAY ACROSS THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

AROUND THE SAME TIME THE JAPANESE DISCOVERED A SIMILAR PHENOMENA, POSSIBLY THE SAME THING, THAT AIDED IN UNDERWATER TRANSMISSIONS.

SOMETHING'S THROWING OUR ASDIC TRACKING OFF, SIR. WE ALWAYS LAND JUST A BIT BEHIND HIM, AND EVEN AFTER ALLOWING FOR COURSE AND SPEED.

WHY HASN'T THIS SHIP YET LANDED A SALVO ON DRIESE, MR. BURTON?!

YOU ARE NOT GETTING TO JAPAN ON MY WATCH, CAPTAIN DRIESE! NOT TODAY, NOT TOMORROW, NOT ANY TIME! I WON'T LET YOU!

THEN START SHOOTING *AHEAD* OF HIM, MR. BURTON. TELL THE GUNNERS TO *LEAD* HIM AS YOU WOULD ANY BIRD ON WING. I WANT HITS AND I WANT THEM NOW! IS THAT CLEAR, MR. BURTON?

YOU ARE STATING THE OBVIOUS, MR. BARTON. OPINION NOTED. WE WILL RECOMMENCE RAPID FULL SALVO FIRE ONCE THE GUNNERS ARE READY.

NEW FIRING ORDERS PASSED, CAPTAIN RICHARD. AND IF I MAY ADD, SIR, HE KNOWS BY NOW WE HAVE ASDIC.

I'LL ADMIT, I THOUGHT IT WAS RIDICULOUS AT FIRST BUT NOW ITS INCLUSION HAS BEEN JUSTIFIED. YOU CAN'T SURFACE AND YOU CAN'T FLEE. I KNOW YOUR EVERY MOVE. *YOU'RE MINE!*

I'LL BET YOU DIDN'T EXPECT THAT, DID YOU DRIESE? A BATTLESHIP WITH ASDIC?

CONTINUE ON COURSE! FIRE WHEN READY!!

ATTENTION BRITISH BATTLESHIP! THIS IS CAPTAIN DRIESE!!

HHRROOONNGGG!!

RAISE THE ANTENNA AND READY THE RADIO!

SONAR IS GETTING CONFUSED, SIR! WE'RE NOW GETTING ECHOES FROM THE ICE AS WELL AS FROM BELOW!

HHRROOONNGGG!!

WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO LET ME KNOW WHO IS IN COMMAND OF YOUR VESSEL?!

SEND THIS REPLY! YOU KNOW WHO I AM, DRIESE! I AM CAPTAIN WEYLAND RICHARD!! I COMMAND THIS VESSEL!!!

IT *IS* HIM! IT *IS* DRIESE!

NOT LIKELY IN EITHER CASE. REPLY: "SEE YOU IN HELL FIRST, RICHARD!"

YOU HAVE BUT TWO CHOICES, DRIESE! YOU CAN SURRENDER OR LET THE AURORAS BE YOUR TOMBSTONE!

THIS WHOLE WAR IS UNFAIR, MR. KREUZ, AND WE'RE LOSING IT. YES, I SAID IT.

AND NOW HE COMMANDS A BATTLESHIP. IT'S NOT FAIR, SIR.

CAPATIN RICHARD ... DIDN'T HE SINK 22 OF OUR U-BOATS, SIR?

ONCE AGAIN, MEN PLAY GUINEA PIGS FOR THE GODS ....

FOR US TO MEET LIKE THIS, IN THE MIDDLE OF WHAT AMOUNTS TO NOWHERE, AND WITH THE SCENE SET FOR ONE TO DESTROY THE OTHER, OR PERHAPS EACH OTHER ....

JA WOHL, CAPTAIN DRIESE!

... ONLY I AND MY FELLOW GERMAN GUINEA PIGS WON'T TAKE THIS LYING DOWN. RIGHT, MR. KREUZ?

WE'VE GOT 400 METERS RATED* TO PLAY WITH, AND I'LL USE ALL I HAVE TO AND MORE TO BEAT RICHARD!

BUT SIR, WHAT IF IT'S TOO DEEP FOR US TO DIVE UNDER? WE'LL BE CRUSHED DIVING THAT DEEP!

TAKE US UNDER AND UP THE OTHER SIDE! THAT'S ONE THING WE CAN DO HE CAN'T!

ICEBERG DEAD AHEAD, SIR!

(*) M-SAN'S VISUALS IDENTIFY DRIESE'S U-BOAT AS PART OF THE TYPE VII SERIES. GIVEN THAT THIS STORY TAKES PLACE IN APRIL OF 1943 PER SOMETHING THAT'S ABOUT TO BE REVEALED IN THE NEXT FEW PAGES, DRIESE'S U-BOAT IS MOST LIKELY A TYPE VIIC-42. THOSE HAD A MAXIMUM RATED CRUSH DEPTH OF 400 METERS.

YES SIR!

ASSUME A ZIG-ZAG COURSE BUT DON'T SLOW DOWN! HE COULD POP UP ANYWHERE OUT THERE!

JUST WHAT I'D EXPECT FROM DRIESE ....

YOU'VE LOST HIM?! HE DIVED UNDER THAT ICEBERG AND NOW YOU CAN'T GET ANY ASDIC READINGS?

DAMN!

TORPEDOES PORTSIDE! 800 METERS AND CLOSING!

SO THE CORNERED BEAST STRIKES ....

HARD TO STARBOARD MR. BARTON!

PERISCOPE SIR! 8000 METERS, 80 DEGREES PORT IN FRONT OF THE ICE!

HE WENT UNDER AND UP THE OTHER SIDE. VERY GOOD ....

ALL HANDS, CRASH DIVE! IT'S TIME FOR HIM TO FIRE HIS NEXT SALVO!!

I'LL BET YOUR ASDIC IS IN A FINE MESS NOW, RICHARD.

WELL, I'VE GOT ONE MORE TRICK UP MY SLEEVE, MY OLD FRIEND.

OH MY! YOU OVERSHOT! YOU'RE FINALLY LEADING YOUR FIRE?

I KNOW THEY'RE RATED ONLY FOR CIVILIAN SHIPS BUT WE DON'T HAVE A CHOICE! COURSE AND SPEED SAME, DISTANCE 8,000!

LOAD ALL FOUR FORWARD TUBES WITH THE NEW "FALKE" HOMING TORPEDOES!*

ALL TUBES FIRED!

FIRE ALL TUBES!

(*) THE T4 "FALKE" WAS THE WORLD'S FIRST EVER HOMING TORPEDO. THE GERMANS FIRST PUT IT INTO SERVICE WITH THEIR U-BOATS IN MARCH OF 1943.

A FULL SPREAD! HARD AGAIN TO STARBOARD!! WE CAN DODGE THEM AGAIN!!!!

MORE TORPEDOES, AGAIN FROM PORT!

ASDIC REPORTS HIGH SPEED SCREWS!

LOOKS LIKE WE'LL AGAIN JUST CLEAR THEM, SIR!

HARD TO STARBOARD, SIR!

WHAT?!

SIR!!! ALL OF THEM HAVE TUNED AND ARE NOW FOLLOWING US!!!!!

GERMANY'S GOT HOMING TORPEDOES! DRIESE HAS HOMING TORPEDOES!! BLOODY HELL!!!

AYE AYE, SIR!

MR. BARTON, HAVE ALL GUNS CONCENTRATE THEIR FIRE ON THE ICE BY AND AROUND THAT U-BOAT. IF WE'RE LUCKY ENOUGH OF IT WILL FALL ON HIM TO SINK HIM.

WELL, IF WE'RE GOING DOWN, DRIESE, THEN YOU'RE COMING WITH US.

YOU CAN'T ESCAPE OUR HOMING TORPEDOES. THIS IS THE END ... YOUR END.

YOU'RE WAY OFF YOUR MARK, RICHARD! YOUR GUNNERS ARE PANICKING AND FIRING TOO HIGH! THEY MUST KNOW AS WELL AS YOU THAT THIS DUEL IS OVER.

SHIT! HE WAS AIMING AT THE ICE! DIVE!! DIVE!! DIVE!!!

MUTIPLE BREACHES IN BOTH HULLS! ALL HANDS ABANDON SHIP!!

EMER-GENCY BLOW!!!

MUTUAL ASSURED DESTRUCTION. SORT OF HAS A RING TO IT.

LOOKS LIKE THE GODS GOT THEIR WAY AFTER ALL.

YES SIR.

MR. KREUZ, SEE THAT THE MEN GET OFF SAFELY, AS FOR ME, I'M STAYING WITH MY BOAT.

I'D LIKE TO SEE THE FACE OF THE MAN WHO KILLED ME BEFORE I DIE.

I'M STAYING, MR. BARTON. IT'S A CAPTAIN'S DUTY AND ALL THAT. SEE THAT THE REST EVACUATE A.S.A.P.

SIR YOU NEED TO--

SEE YOU IN HELL, DRIESE.

THE SURVIVORS OF BOTH VESSELS WERE RESCUED BY ROYAL NAVY SUNDERLAND FLYING BOATS SHORTLY THEREAFTER.

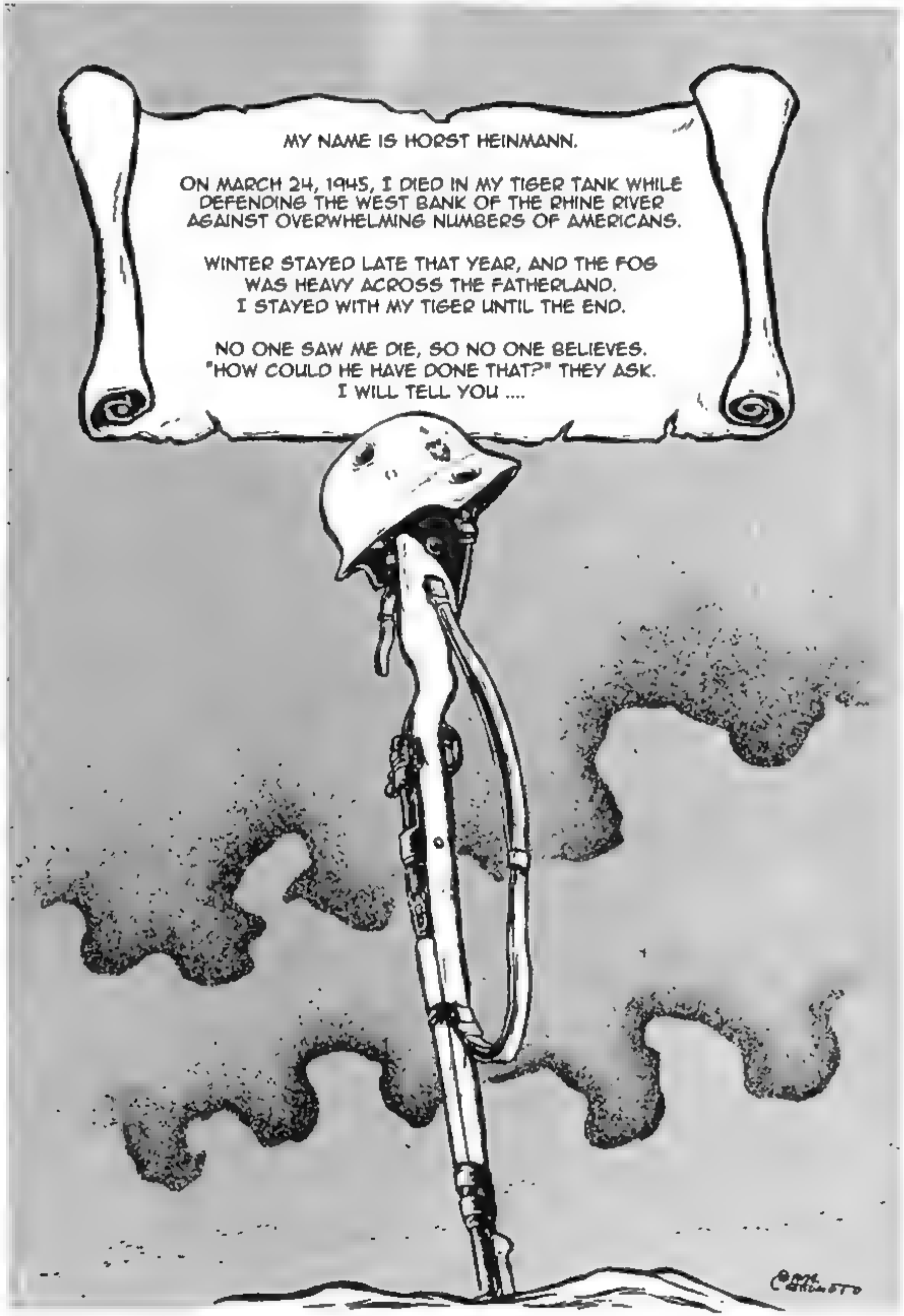
FOR HIS PART MR. KREUZ NEVER SPOKE OF THE AFFAIR. HE SPENT THE REST OF THE WAR AS A PRISONER OF THE BRITISH. HE DISAPPEARED SHORTLY AFTER THE WAR WAS OVER. HE WAS LAST SEEN WALKING ALONG THE SHORE OF THE NORTH SEA, SAYING NOTHING AND LOOKING NOWHERE IN PARTICULAR. AFTER THAT HE WAS GONE, NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN.

THE AURORA BOREALIS STILL SHINES OVER THE ARCTIC SKIES AS IT ALWAYS HAS ... SAVE THAT IN THIS CASE IT ALSO SERVES AS THE TOMBSTONE OF NOT ONE BUT TWO BRAVE AND DETERMINED MEN.

<Published in Weekly Shonen Sunday, Issue 40, 1975>

LEIJI
MATSUMOTO
PRESENTS

THE COCKPIT


MY NAME IS HORST HEINMANN.
ON MARCH 24, 1945, I DIED IN MY TIGER TANK WHILE DEFENDING THE WEST BANK OF THE RHINE RIVER AGAINST OVERWHELMING NUMBERS OF AMERICANS.
WINTER STAYED LATE THAT YEAR, AND THE FOG WAS HEAVY ACROSS THE FATHERLAND. I STAYED WITH MY TIGER UNTIL THE END.
NO ONE SAW ME DIE, SO NO ONE BELIEVES. "HOW COULD HE HAVE DONE THAT?" THEY ASK. I WILL TELL YOU ....

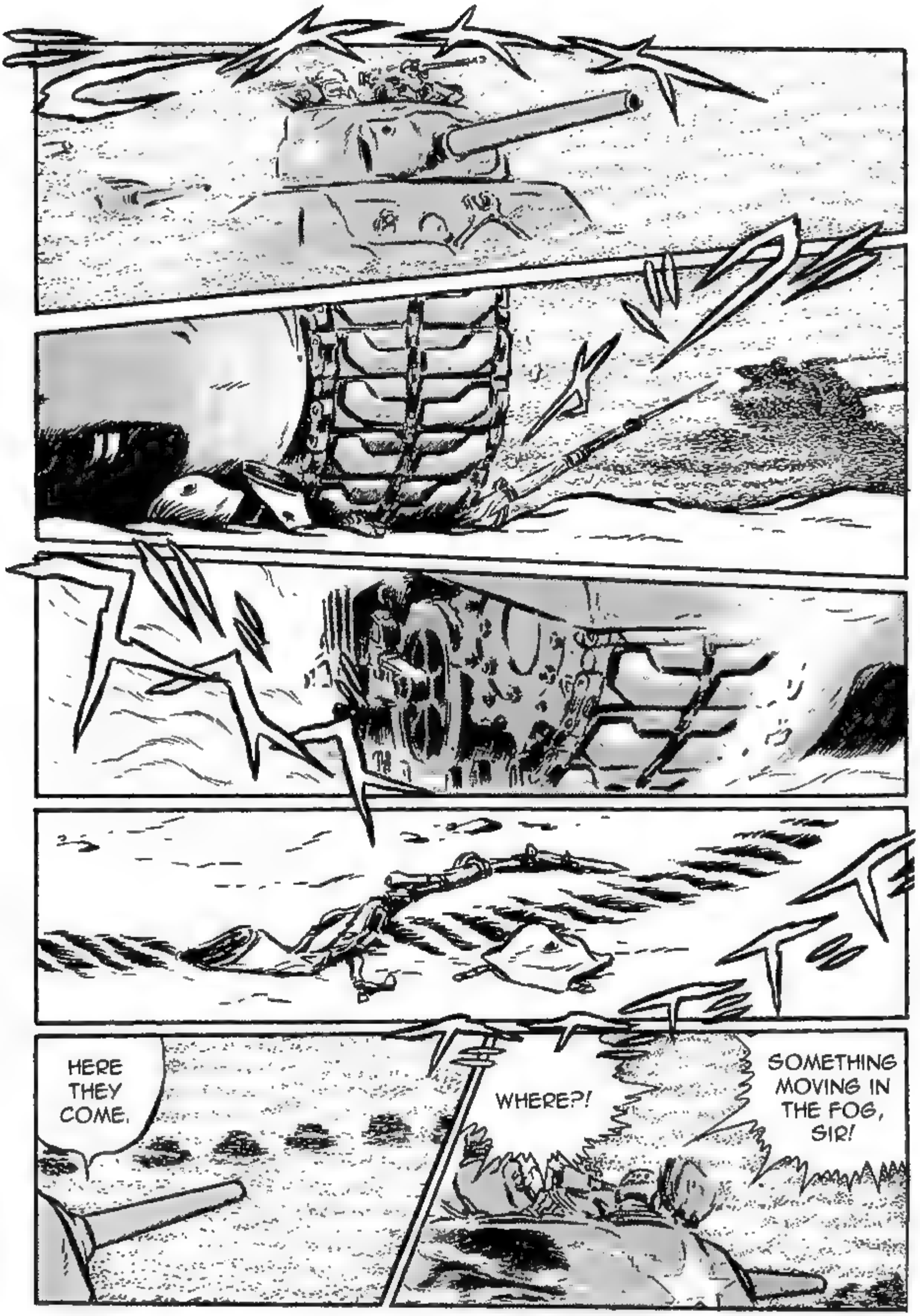
HEY YOU! OVER THERE, STANDING BY YOURSELF!!

FUCK THAT SHIT! I WANT SOME LIVE GERMANS TO FIGHT!! THE WAR'S ALMOST OVER!!!

STUPID! IT'S JUST A HELMET ON A GUN. PROB'LY A GRAVE.

HEY GIMME THAT! I WANNA SWIG!!

LOOK OUT!!! HERE COME THE TANKS! YOU WANNA GET RUN OVER?!


HERE THEY COME.
WHERE?!
SOMETHING MOVING IN THE FOG, SIR!

TIGER
ON THE RHINE

THOSE ARE THE ONES DEFILING THE SACRED SOIL OF THE FATHERLAND! WIPE THEM OUT! WIPE THEM ALL OUT!
THEY'RE ON THE EDGE OF THE SAINT SAËNS FOREST. AMERICAN M4 SHERMANS. DISTANCE, 800 METERS.
ATTACK!!!
OHMIGAWD, KING TIGERS!!!

KRUGE! THIS IS COLONEL LASNER! COVER OUR RIGHT FLANK!

HEINMANN! TAKE YOUR TANKS AND COVER OUR LEFT FLANK!

I'M COUNTING ON YOU!

ALL TANKS COVER OUR RIGHT FLANK!

LASNER, JA WOHL!*

I WANT EVERY SINGLE AMERICAN TANK DESTROYED! I WANT EVERY SINGLE AMERICAN INFANTRYMAN CRUSHED! NOW DO IT!!!

HEINMANN, JA WOHL!

(*) JA WOHL - DE. "YES SIR!" OR MORE LITERALLY "IT WILL BE DONE!" FREQUENTLY MISPRONOUNCED BY AMERICANS (WINK)

EVANS, MCCLUSKY, RIGHT AND LEFT!! FIRE!!!

HESTON, I WANT THE ONE IN THE MIDDLE!

500 METERS TO TARGET!! ALL TANKS, READY TO FIRE!!!

I SAY WE TAKE OUT THAT TANK THAT SHOT US.

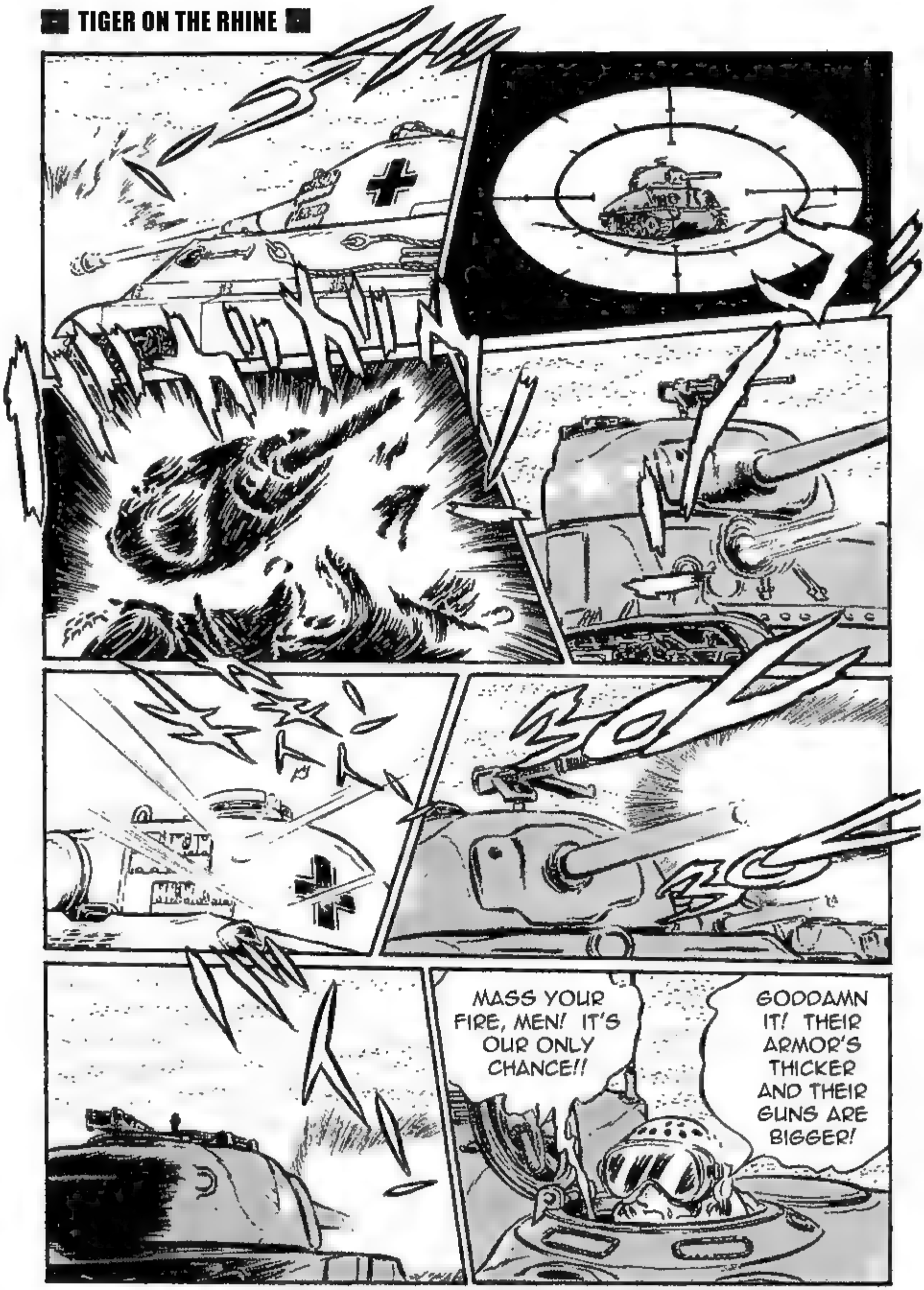
THAT'S WHY WE HAVE GOGGLES SIR.

I'VE GOT SOMETHING IN MY EYE, HANS.

HEINMANN? SIR?! WHAT'S WRONG? WE HAVEN'T EVEN ATTACKED YET!

JA WOHL!

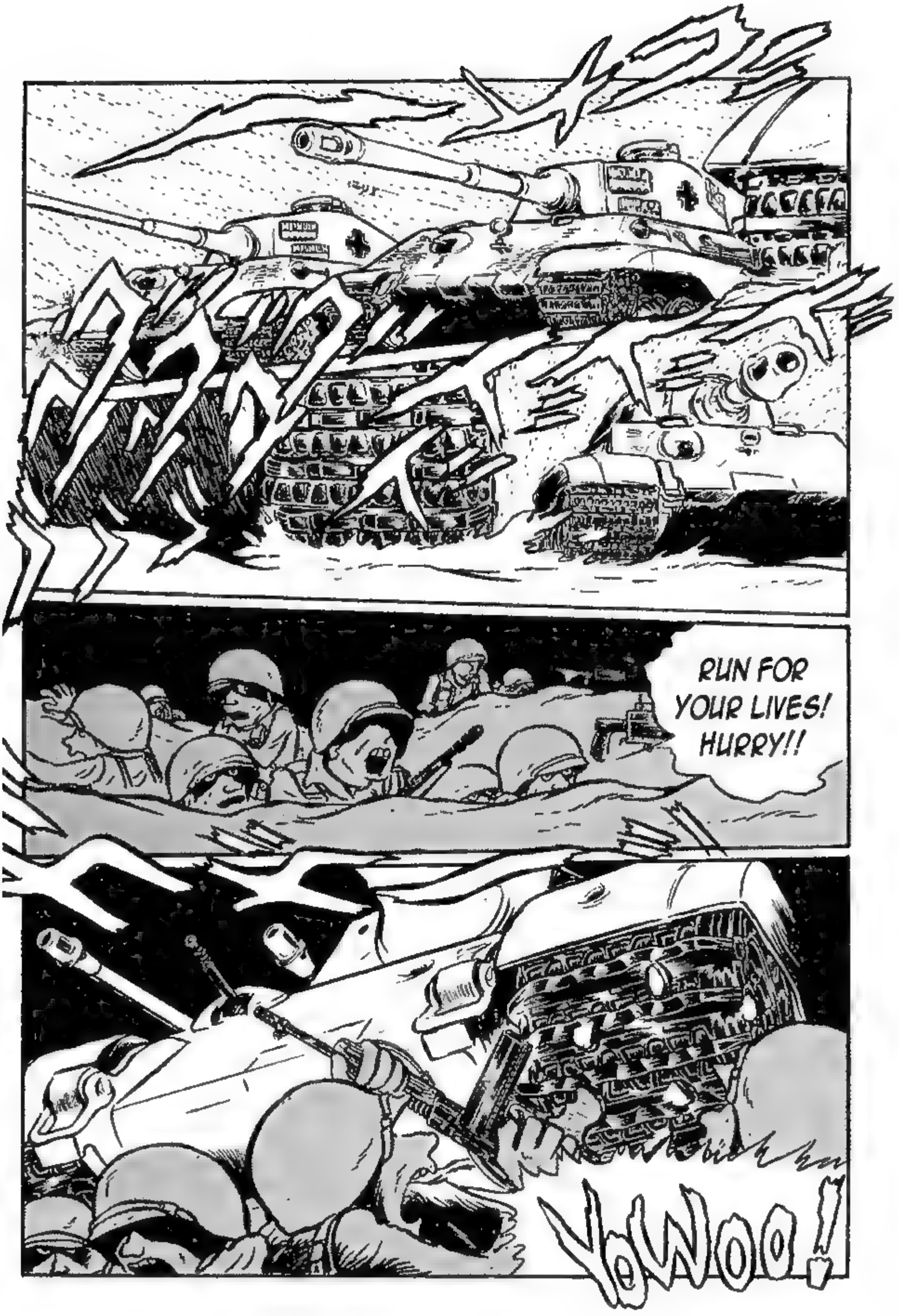
I'M GOOD NOW, AND SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD IDEA! LET'S DO IT!


MASS YOUR FIRE, MEN! IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE!!
GODDAMN IT! THEIR ARMOR'S THICKER AND THEIR GUNS ARE BIGGER!

PAR FOR THE COURSE SIR! OOHHH, THREE M4S IN SIGHT!

I'LL NEVER GET USED TO THAT SOUND.

ALL TANKS LEFT FLANK!
JA WOHL!
HE'S NOT DOING NEARLY AS WELL AS YOU AND YOUR BOYS ARE!
HEINMANN! BREAK OFF AND GO HELP KRUGE AT THE SAINT SAËNS!


RUN FOR YOUR LIVES! HURRY!!
YoWoo!

EAT TH--
I WAS BEING NICE. I COULD HAVE USED MY STG-44.*
"SORRY, PARDNER." TOO MANY YANKS BEFORE YOU HAVE TRIED THAT LITTLE STUNT ON ME.

49 (*) ONE OF THE FREAKIEST GERMAN INVENTIONS OF THE WAR THAT ACTUALLY WORKED WAS THE KRUMMLAUF. IT WAS A SPECIAL CURVED BARREL ATTACHMENT FOR THE STG-44 STURMGEWEHR ASSAULT RIFLE THAT ALLOWED IT TO SHOOT AROUND CORNERS, EVEN ON FULL AUTO. IT WAS DEVELOPED SO PANZER CREWS COULD STICK IT THROUGH ANY OPENING TO DISCOURAGE WHAT YOU SEE ABOVE.

LOOKS LIKE WE'VE CLEARED THE WEST BANK FOR NOW, BUT IT'S ONLY TEMPORARY.

THEN AGAIN, THEY ALSO HAVE TWO GOOD SPOTS FOR THROWING UP PONTOON BRIDGES ....

THE LUDENDORF BRIDGE AT REMAGEN IS THE LAST ONE WE HAVE. IF IT'S TAKEN ...

WITHDRAW?! THIS MAKES NO SENSE!

SIR! RADIO MESSAGE! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE IT, SIR.

YOU NEVER HEARD ME SAY THAT. VERY WELL, BUT I'M NOT GOING TO LEAVE THIS PART OF THE SACRED SOIL OF GERMANY WITHOUT SOME DEFENSE!

WE'VE BEEN ORDERED TO PULL BACK ACROSS THE RIVER. THEY'RE CONFUSED! FIRST THEY ORDER US UP HERE TO HOLD THIS AREA AT ALL COSTS AND NOW THEY ORDER US OUT? WHO'S GIVING THESE ORDERS?! THE FUERHER?!!

THE AMERICANS ARE ONLY 15 KILOMETERS AWAY. IF I'M GOING TO DO THIS THING I NEED TO DO IT NOW.

HEINMANN? THIS IS COLONEL LASNER. I HAVE SPECIAL ORDERS FOR YOU.

HEADQUARTERS WON'T MISS ONE OF MY KING TIGERS ... AND ONE KING TIGER CAN TAKE OUT OR HOLD UP PLENTY OF SHERMANS.

... ONE FINAL SURPRISE FOR THOSE COCKY AMERICANS AND THEIR FLIMSY LITTLE TANKS!

ALL OF THIS FOG WILL DEFINITELY HELP IN ME LEAVING BEHIND ...

I KNOW YOU WERE BORN IN AND LIVED IN THIS AREA BEFORE THE WAR. TAKE YOUR TANK, FALL OUT, AND FIND THE BEST PLACE TO HIDE FOR A FINAL DEFENSE. UNDERSTAND?

YOU'RE MY BEST MAN, HEINMANN. DON'T MAKE ME MAKE IT AN ORDER.

BUT SIR! WE WANT TO GO WITH YOU! WE WANT TO--

NOR I YOU, HEINMANN.

Y-YES, SIR. I'LL GIVE IT MY BEST, AND I WON'T FORGET YOU, SIR!

USE YOUR BEST JUDGEMENT, HEINMANN. JUST DON'T FORGET THAT IF WE CAN'T BLOW THAT BRIDGE IN TIME AND THE AMERICANS TAKE IT INTACT, THEN IT'LL BE AN OPEN HIGHWAY FOR THEM STRAIGHT INTO THE FATHERLAND. DO YOUR BEST, HEINMANN.

SIR, SHOULD I PARK MY TANK IN FRONT OF THE BRIDGE OR AM I FREE TO CHOOSE MY OWN PLACE OF CONCEALMENT?

AS COLONEL LASNER SAID, DO I HAVE TO MAKE IT AN ORDER?

BUT SIR! A TANK AND ITS CREW ARE ONE! YOU CAN'T DO YOUR BEST WITHOUT US, SIR! WE DON'T WANT TO BE LEFT BEHIND! WE KNOW YOU'RE NOT COMING BACK FROM THIS AND WE WANT TO DIE WITH YOU! PLEASE!!!

ONE LAST REQUEST, SIR. MAY I LEAVE MY CREW BEHIND WITH YOU? FOR WHAT YOU NEED ME TO DO I DON'T NEED THEM. I CAN MAN THE TANK MYSELF.

. . . .

!

I AGREE. GET OVER HERE, MEN.

EVERYONE ELSE PREPARE TO MOVE OUT! WE'LL TAKE THE BRIDGE BACK INTO THE RHINELAND!

HEINMANN! YOU ALONE WILL TAKE YOUR TANK AND FOLLOW MY ORDERS! THE REST OF YOU GET YOUR ASSES OVER HERE!!

AMERICAN SPOTTER PLANE. DAMN. WE'RE OUT OF TIME.

I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT! NOW GET ON, OR I'LL HAVE YOU SHOT WHERE YOU STAND! NOW MOVE!
SIR, AT THE RISK OF--
ARE YOU SET BACK THERE? GOOD. EVERYONE! IT'S TIME TO MOVE OUT!!
I ALREADY HAVE ONE IN MIND, RIGHT BEFORE THEY CAN GET TO THE BRIDGE! I'LL BE WAITING FOR THEM!!
GOOD LUCK, SIR! FIND A SAFE PLACE TO HIDE WITH THE TANK!
I WILL, SIR.
DO YOUR BEST!
SIEG HEIL!
SIEG HEIL, HEINMANN.

YOU GUYS HANG ON BACK THERE.

EVERY SINGLE MINUTE YOU CAN HOLD OFF THE AMERICANS FROM CROSSING THE RHINE IS ONE MORE MINUTE OF LIFE FOR THE FATHERLAND!

DON'T DIE RIGHT AWAY, YOU HEAR HEINMANN?!

GOODBYE ... MY FRIENDS.

HE'S ONE BRAVE SUNUVABITCH TO STAY BEHIND KNOWING THE ODDS HE'S UP AGAINST.

I FEEL TERRIBLE. IF I WASN'T SO AFRAID OF GETTING SHOT I'D JUMP OFF THIS TANK AND GO BACK TO HELP HIM. YOU KNOW?

MAYBE HE'LL GET TO PAINT AGAIN SOMEDAY.

NOT LIKE, WELL, BUT A REAL PAINTER. I ONCE SAW SOME OF HIS WORK.

THE FUNNY THING IS THAT HE WAS A PAINTER BEFORE THE WAR.

JA WOHL.

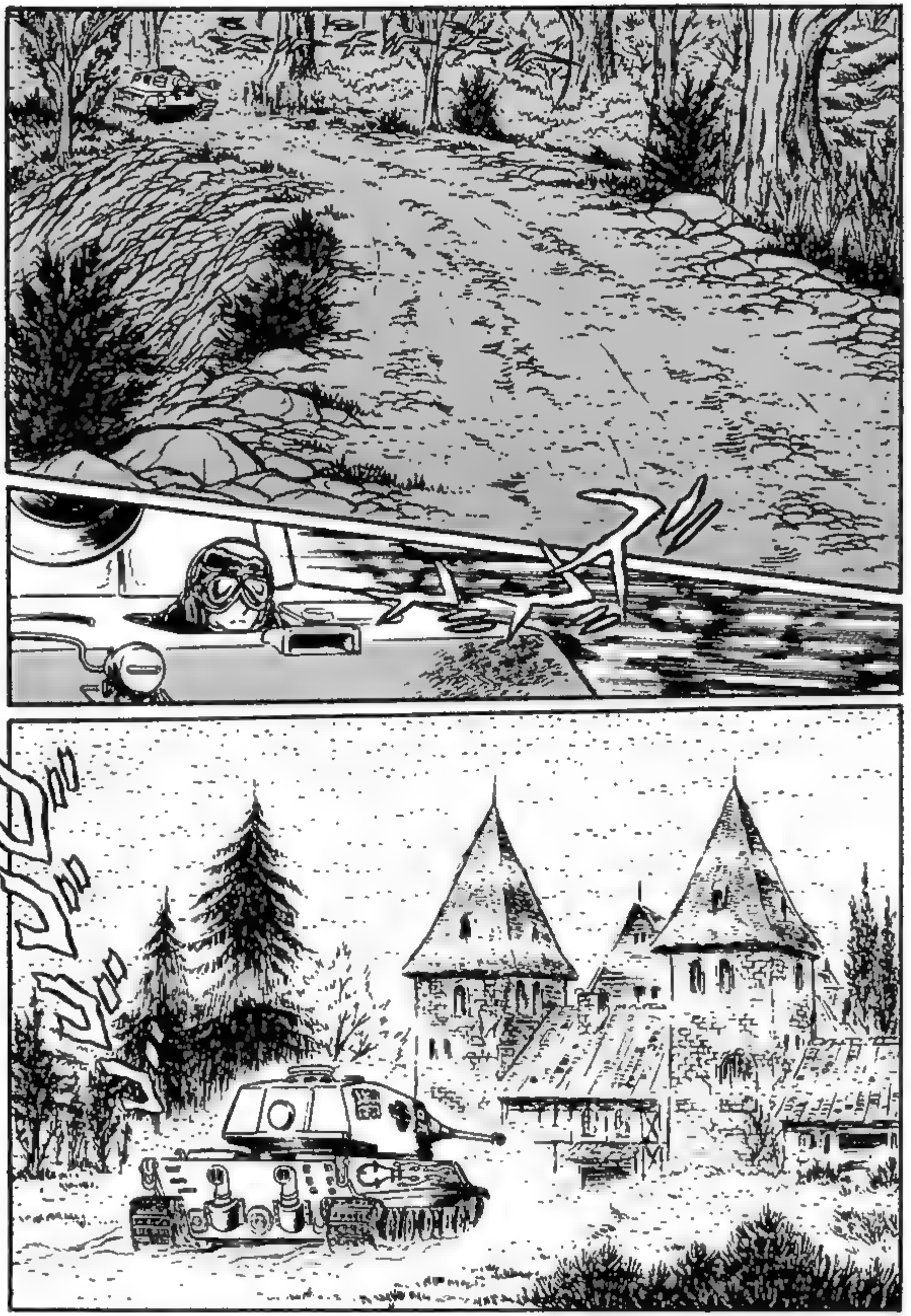
KNOCK OFF THAT SENTIMENTAL SHIT RIGHT NOW, YOU HEAR?! WE STILL HAVE A WAR TO FIGHT!

I TELL YOU WHAT.

IT'S JUST YOU AND ME NOW, OLD FRIEND ... AS YOU KNEW IT WOULD ALWAYS BE.

LET'S GO TO MY HOUSE, OKAY?

LET'S YOU AND I GO SOMEPLACE SPECIAL.



THE GARAGE IS PERFECT.

I'LL BE BACK IN A BIT, OKAY?

IT'S STILL HERE.

.....
WHO'S THERE?!

NOW TURN AROUND. NICE AND EASY. NO SUDDEN MOVES. IT'S SURPRISING TO FIND YOU HERE ALL BY YOURSELF.

DROP THE PISTOL, YOU S.S. PANZER PIG, BEFORE I DROP YOU!!

OH, REALLY?

I USED TO LIVE HERE BEFORE THE WAR.

HOW'D YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS LOFT? THAT'S NOT COMMON KNOWLEGE.

THEN ...

... FROM ITS RAFTERS TO ITS FOUNDATION. THAT'S HOW I KNEW ABOUT THIS LOFT.

NO. I INHERITED IT. FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, I KNOW EVERY INCH OF IT ...

THE NEXT THING YOU'LL BE TELLING ME IS THAT THE PARTY GAVE YOU THIS CHALET.

I'M GLAD I GOT TO COME BACK BEFORE THE END. I'M GLAD THINGS WORKED OUT THE WAY THEY DID ... HELENE.
I WAS BORN HERE, RAISED HERE, LIVED HERE, AND ONE WAY OR ANOTHER I'M GOING TO DIE HERE TOO.
HELENE DUMONT!* GOOD TO SEE YOU TOO!
HORST! HORST HEINMANN! IT'S BEEN SUCH A LONG TIME!!
I'M AFRAID NOT.
LET ME GUESS. YOU'VE GIVEN UP THE S.S. AND COME BACK TO PAINT AGAIN. PLEASE TELL ME IT'S SO!
AND YOU, GONE GUERILLA! OR SHOULD I SAY FRENCH MAQUIS. YOU ALWAYS DID HAVE THE FIRE IN YOU.
S.S. PANZER CORPS. I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED.
I WAS ORDERED HERE WITH MY TANK TO DEFEND THIS PART OF GERMANY UNTIL THE END.
LOOK AROUND YOU. THE WAR IS OVER. TAKE OFF THAT UNIFORM AND BE HORST HEINMANN AGAIN!
YOU DISAPPOINT ME, HORST. I THOUGHT YOU HAD MORE SENSE THAN THAT.

 (*) – "DUMONT" IS ONE OF MY INTRUSIONS. HELENE HAS NO LAST NAME IN THE ORIGINAL. (R.M.)

YOU'VE WHAT?! OH, HORST!

I'VE HIDDEN MY TIGER IN THE GARAGE BELOW. WE WILL DIE AS ONE.

I CAN'T DO THAT NO MORE THAN YOU CAN QUIT THE MAQUIS. THE WAR IS STILL WITH US, HELENE.

THAT'S MADNESS! IT'S NOTHING BUT A MACHINE OF WAR!!

SHUT UP! I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT! I'M A LOYAL GERMAN SOLDIER! I'LL DEFEND THIS SPOT TO THE LAST!! DON'T EVER ASK THAT OF ME AGAIN!!!

IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE THE AMERICANS GET HERE. GO TO THIS END OF THE BRIDGE AND WAIT FOR THEM. WHEN YOU SEE THE FIRST OF THEM, FLY A WHITE FLAG AND GIVE THEM THE TANK!

THINK OF WHAT YOU'RE SAYING!

NOW LISTEN TO ME.

HORST, YOUR MASTERS HAVE KILLED MILLIONS WHOLESALE WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT. THAT'S WHY THAT DEATH'S HEAD INSIGINA YOU WEAR IS SO APPROPRIATE FOR THEM.

THEY'VE GOT YOU, DON'T THEY? HEART AND SOUL. YOU BELIEVE ALL OF IT.

OH, HORST.

IF YOU DO, I'LL ... I ....

DON'T FORGET WHAT WAS ... BECAUSE IT'S GONE.

BUT HE'S GONE, AND I KNOW THAT NOW. IRONIC, THAT THIS PLACE WOULD BE OUR FINAL MEETING. DON'T FORGET THE GIRL IN THAT PICTURE, HORST.

... AND FINISH THAT PAINTING OF ME. THE HORST THAT I MODELED FOR, THE HORST I ... THAT I MADE LOVE TO BACK THEN.

HOW I'VE LONGED FOR THE OLD HORST TO COME BACK ...

OH, HELENE ...

LIKE SHE SAID, THE PAST IS GONE AND CAN NEVER COME BACK. IT'S JUST YOU AND ME NOW, MY IRON FRIEND.

SAVE YOURSELF, OR YOUR IRON FRIEND WILL BE AN IRON COFFIN!

I'VE GOT TO GO. THE AMERICANS WILL BE AT THE BRIDGE SOON, AND SO WILL I. I HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE, HORST.

.....

HORST! I'M COMING ....

PLATOON ... BOMBED ... LASNER'S DEAD ... GUNTER AND I ... BUT THE MAQUIS ....

HANS! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?! YOU HAD YOUR ORDERS!

YOU IDIOT! YOU KNOW WHAT I'VE GOT TO DO!!

COULD ... COULD YOU USE AN OLD HAND ... WITH THE TANK ... ?

I'M GLAD I GET TO DIE HERE WITH YOU, MY FRIEND .... AFTER ALL, IT'S STILL A PART OF GERMANY .... I'LL STILL DIE ON OUR SACRED SOIL ....

I KNEW THIS AREA WAS YOU HOME ... I REMEMBER YOU TALKING ABOUT IT ....

HERE. LET ME HELP YOU IN. EASY, EASY ...

THANKS, SIR .... IT'S GOOD TO BE WITH YOU AGAIN ....

SHE STOPPED WHEN SHE SAW US ... AND THAT'S WHEN THE MAQUIS CAME OUT OF THE TREES ... GUNTER DIED IN THEIR FIRST VOLLEY. I WAS WOUNDED ... BUT I HAD MY SCHMEISSER* ... WHO IS SHE, SIR? DO YOU KNOW HER ... ?

SIR ... BEFORE GUNTER AND I WERE ATTACKED ... WE SAW AN ARMED WOMAN RUN UP THE ROAD FROM HERE.

(*) SCHMEISSER - COMMON NICKNAME FOR THE GERMAN MP-40 SUBMACHINE GUN. THE NICKNAME WAS MORE PROPERLY APPLIED TO ITS WORLD WAR I ANCESTOR BUT IT WAS CALLED THE SCHMEISSER ANYWAY BY BOTH SIDES DURING THE WAR.

HELENE AND I MET IN ART SCHOOL. SHE WOUND UP BEING MY MODEL ... AND MORE.

YES ....

THAT'S HER! YOU STARTED HER PICTURE! SO YOU KNEW EACH OTHER BEFORE THE WAR?

... AND I HAVE A JOB TO DO. A LITTLE WHILE AGO SHE MADE ME MAKE A CHOICE BETWEEN HER AND MY TIGER ....

... BUT NOW I CAN'T. I'M AN OFFICER IN THE S.S. AND ...

YOU KNOW, THERE WERE TIMES I USED TO PROMISE MYSELF THAT I'D COME BACK AND FINISH THIS ...

THEN THE WAR CAME AND DROVE US APART, HER BEING FRENCH.

YES ... MY DUTY.

I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT, SIR. AT LEAST YOU KNOW YOUR DUTY.

I CHOSE MY TIGER. IT WAS THE ONLY CHOICE I COULD MAKE.

... BUT REALITY LIVES IN THE REAL WORLD. THE REALITY OF WAR, WITH ITS CRUELTY AND KILLING. THE WAR'S MADE US KILLERS, YOU KNOW?

DREAMS LIVE IN PICTURES ...

PICTURES ARE ONE THING. REALITY IS ANOTHER.

... AND SHE'S WITH THE MAQUIS NOW.

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. YOU SEE, HELENE WAS THAT DREAM ...

YOU GO FIND AND SAVE THAT DREAM YOU ONCE HAD. AS ONE FRIEND TO ANOTHER, OKAY? I MEAN IT.

HEY, HORST? TELL YOU WHAT. LET ME HANDLE THE TIGER, OKAY?

DOES SHE KNOW ABOUT THE TANK?!?

SHE MIGHT BE PART OF THAT BUNCH THAT AMBUSHED US EARLIER AND KILLED GUNTER!

THAT WAS HER?!

SHE SURPRISED ME HERE BUT LET ME LIVE AND THEN LEFT. I'M PROPERLY GRATEFUL.

LOVESICK IDIOT! SHE'S MAQUIS!! YOU SAID SO YOURSELF!!!

NO SHE WON'T. TRUST ME ON THIS.

YOU DAMN FOOL! NOW SHE'LL ALERT THE AMERICANS!! THEY'LL COME & DESTROY IT!!!

YES. I TOLD HER.

YOU DON'T KNOW HER LIKE I DO. I TRUST HER, HANS.

BECAUSE SHE'S FUCKING MAQUIS!

SHE WANTED ME TO BE THE ONE TO GIVE IT TO THEM. WHY SHOULD SHE TELL THEM ABOUT IT?

SHE'S THE REASON WHY GUNTER AND FRITZ ARE DEAD! IF I SEE HER, I'M GONNA KILL HER, YOU HEAR?!

WELL I DON'T! SHE'S MAQUIS!

THEY CAME EARLY!! THE--

HORST! GET OUT OF HERE!! HURRY!!!

YOU HEAR THAT?!?! THOSE ARE THE AMERICANS!! WHERE'S YOUR TRUST NOW?!?!

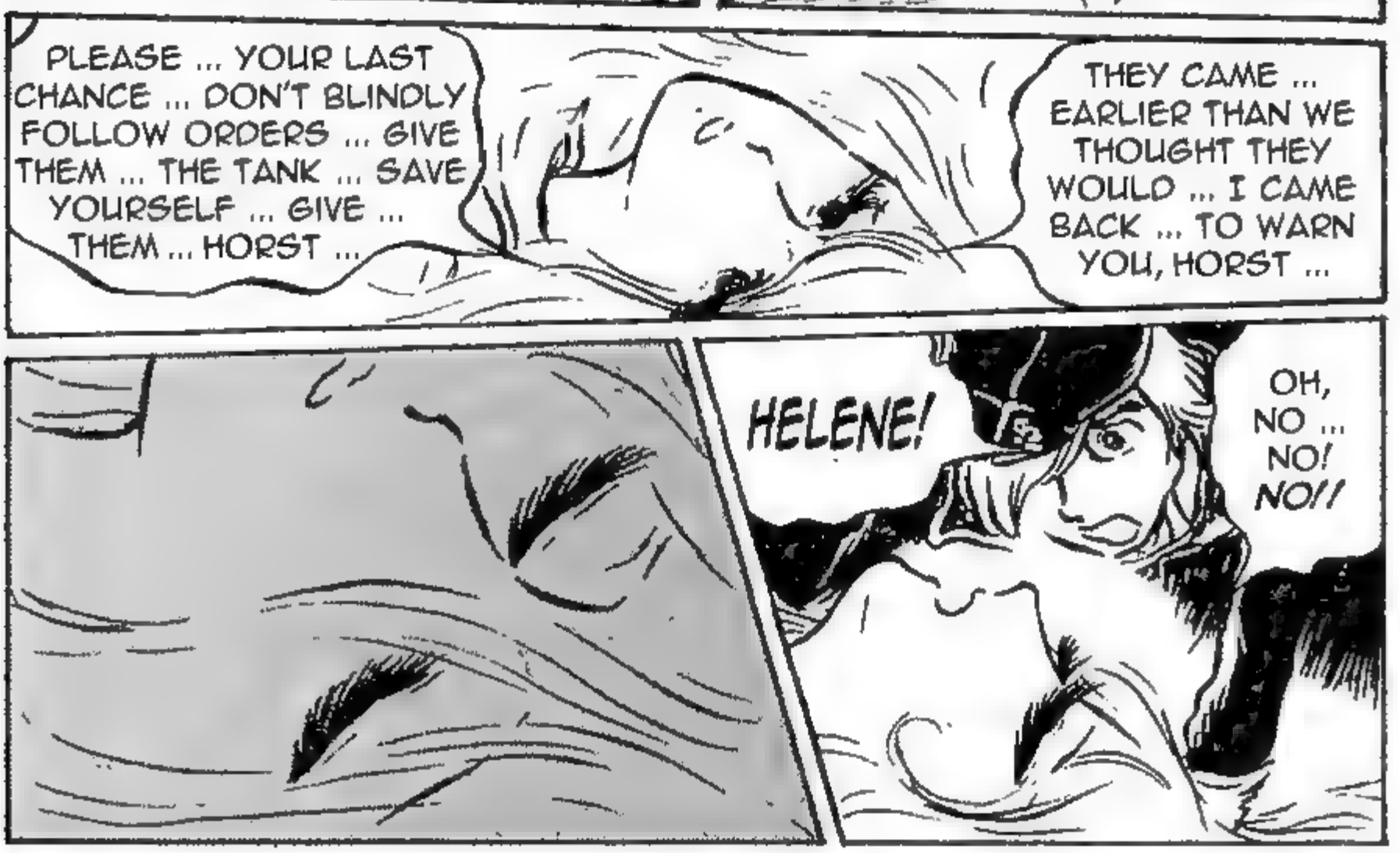
TIME TO DIE!!!

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, MAQUIS BITCH!!!

HELENE!

BOOM!!!

BRUMM!!!
HELENE!
HANS!
HELENE!


PLEASE ... YOUR LAST CHANCE ... DON'T BLINDLY FOLLOW ORDERS ... GIVE THEM ... THE TANK ... SAVE YOURSELF ... GIVE ... THEM ... HORST ...
THEY CAME ... EARLIER THAN WE THOUGHT THEY WOULD ... I CAME BACK ... TO WARN YOU, HORST ...
HELENE!
OH, NO ... NO! NO!!

THERE ARE GERMANS IN THAT CHALET! OPEN FIRE!!

I THOUGHT ALL THE TIGER TANKS HAD ALREADY LEFT THE AREA!

SHIT! THERE'S A TIGER TANK HIDDEN IN THERE!!

TAKE IT OUT! IF WE DON'T, IT CAN BLOCK ANY ADVANCE ON THE BRIDGE FROM IN THERE!!

SHELL THE CHALET! BURY IT!! ALL THAT STONE WILL DO THE JOB!!!

I DIED ON THAT DAY, MARCH 24, 1945. I WAS THE FINAL DEFENDER OF THE LUDENDORF BRIDGE AT REMAGEN. ONCE I DIED ... WELL ... YOU KNOW.

LET US DIE TOGETHER, FRIEND ....

TIGER, MY OLD FRIEND ... IT'S JUST YOU AND ME AT THE END, AS I KNEW IT WOULD ALWAYS BE ....

THE PAST IS THE PAST. YOU'RE MY ONLY FRIEND NOW ... MY FINAL FRIEND ....

MY NAME IS HORST HEINMANN. I WAS THE LAST DEFENDER BEFORE THE AMERICANS REACHED REMAGEN. I DIED ALONG WITH MY TIGER TANK AND MANY AMERICANS IN THAT BATTLE.

IT IS SAID THAT WAR MAKES STRANGE BEDFELLOWS. WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT MY LAST FRIEND AT THE END WOULD HAVE BEEN MY MOST LOYAL FRIEND OF ALL -- MY TIGER TANK?

NOW I AND MY TIGER ARE ONE, AND WE STILL FIGHT TOGETHER ... MY ONE TRUE FRIEND AND I.

Published in Weekly Shonen Sunday, 1974

TIGER ON THE RHINE

ENDE

LEIJI
MATSUMOTO
PRESENTS

THE COCKPIT

IN EUROPE THE KNIGHTLY TRADITION IS AN OLD AND HONORED ONE, AND IS STILL TREATED WITH RESPECT EVEN IN THESE MODERN TIMES.

THE TEUTONIC KNIGHTS OF GERMANY WERE AMONG THE BEST BACK IN THEIR DAY, WITH A REPUTATION OF MAINTAINING THEIR NOBILITY UNTIL THE END ....

WELL, IF IT AIN'T FRITZ AND HIS FRIENDS COME TO PLAY AGAIN! GERMAN FIGHTERS, TO THE LEFT AND COMING UP FAST!

MUSTANGS, AFTER THEM! ALL MACHINE GUNNERS IN ALL PLANES, GET READY!!

YOU THINK HE'LL BE IN THE FIRST WAVE OR THE SECOND?

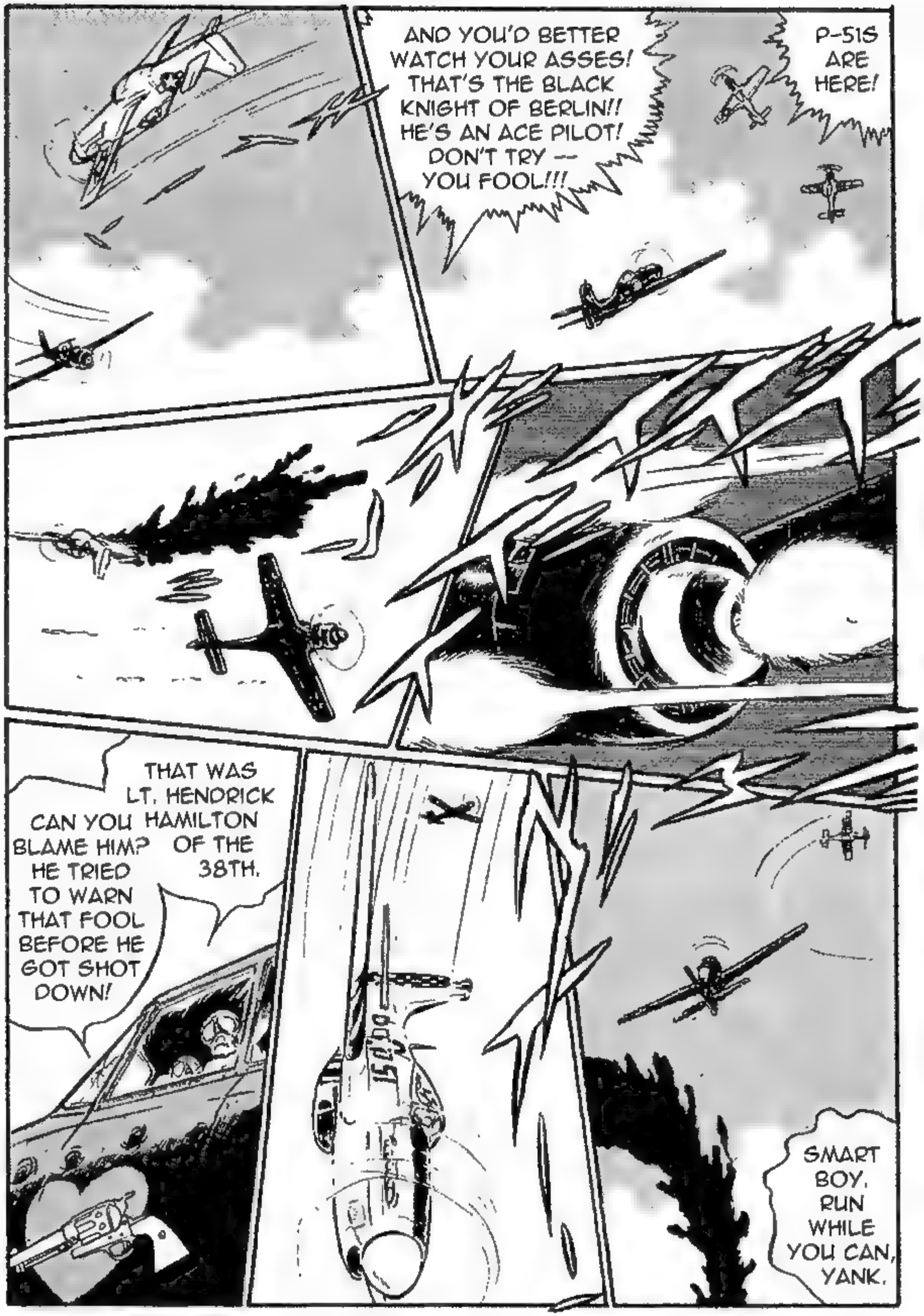
DON'T GET TOO FAR, THERE'S PROB'LY MORE ON THE WAY!

WE'LL TAKE CARE OF 'EM, GUYS!

THE BLACK KNIGHT OF BERLIN

FIRST WAVE! THERE HE IS!! THE BLACK KNIGHT OF BERLIN!!!

VROOOO


AND YOU'D BETTER WATCH YOUR ASSES! THAT'S THE BLACK KNIGHT OF BERLIN!! HE'S AN ACE PILOT! DON'T TRY -- YOU FOOL!!!
P-51S ARE HERE!
THAT WAS LT. HENDRICK HAMILTON OF THE 38TH.
CAN YOU BLAME HIM? HE TRIED TO WARN THAT FOOL BEFORE HE GOT SHOT DOWN!
SMART BOY. RUN WHILE YOU CAN, YANK.

ROGER, AND GOOD LUCK DOWN THERE.

WE'RE BAILING OUT, REPEAT, WE'RE BAILING OUT!!!

THIS IS SIOUX CITY SUE! BOTH OF OUR WING TANKS ARE SHOT UP!

RELAX. HE ONLY GOES AFTER THE FIGHTERS AND UNDAMAGED BOMBERS.

OH, SHIT! THE BLACK KNIGHT OF BERLIN IS BACK!

THOSE P-51S OUT THERE, THOUGH, ARE FAIR GAME.

WE'RE DAMAGED, SO HE'S NOT AFTER US.

HE ALSO DOESN'T STRAFE GUYS IN CHUTES EITHER, LIKE SOME OF THE OTHER GERMANS DO.

THAT'S WHY THEY CALL HIM THE BLACK KNIGHT. HE FIGHTS THE AIR WAR LIKE A WORLD WAR I ACE, ACCORDING TO THE OLD RULES OF CHIVALRY.

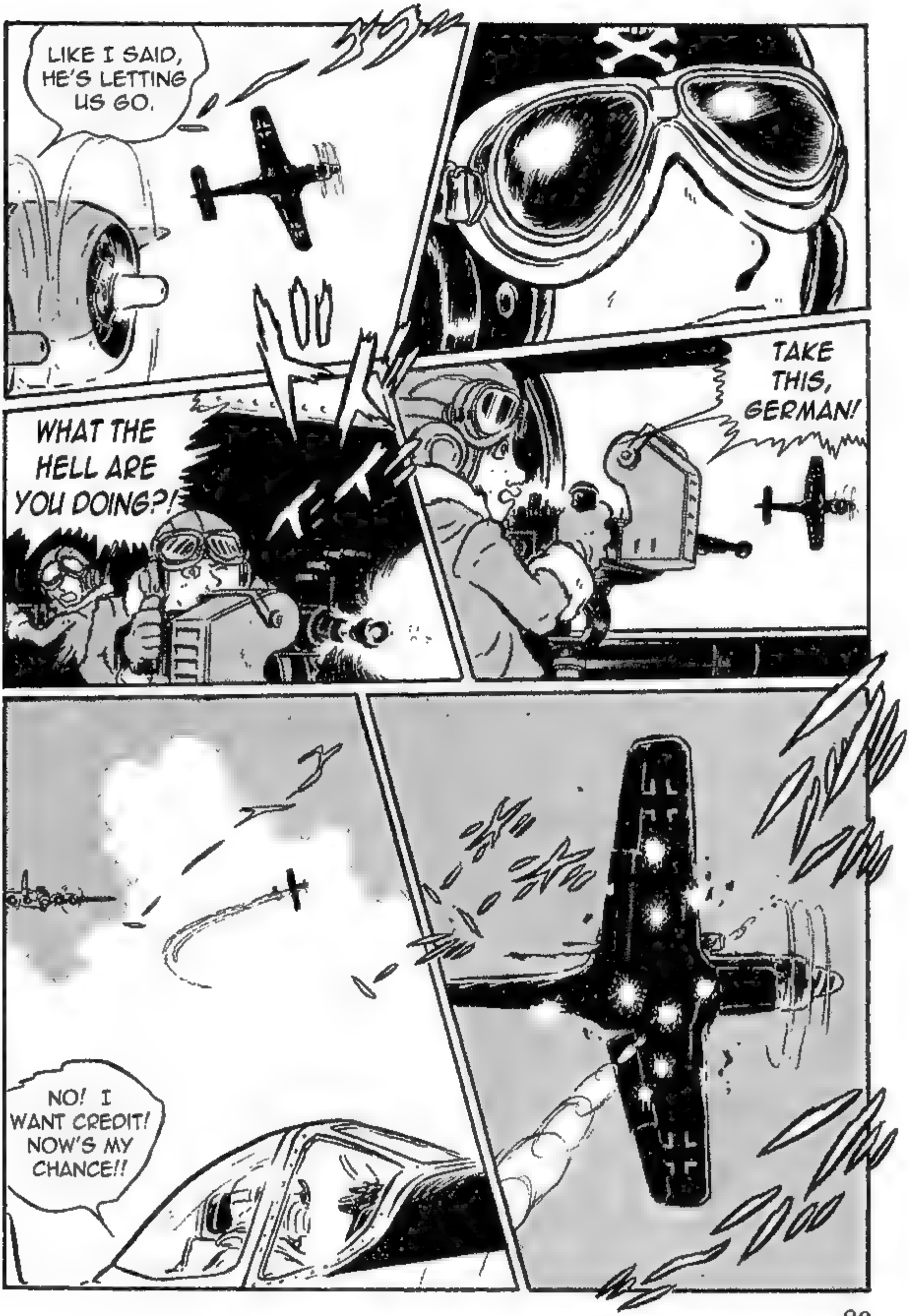
I WILL SHOOT YOU DOWN SOMEDAY, YOU GERMAN SON OF A BITCH!

I DON'T CARE WHO OR WHAT YOU THINK YOU ARE!

GO HOME, CRIP.*

SEE WHAT I MEAN? WE'RE DAMAGED. WE'RE SAFE.

(*) – "CRIP," SHORT FOR "CRIPPLE" AND IN THIS CASE A CRIPPLED AIRCRAFT.


LIKE I SAID, HE'S LETTING US GO.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!
TAKE THIS, GERMAN!
NO! I WANT CREDIT! NOW'S MY CHANCE!!

OH NO,
NOT YOU ....

WELL CONGRATS DUMMY! YOU JUST GAVE LT. HAMILTON HIS CHANCE TO SHOOT DOWN THE BLACK KNIGHT OF BERLIN AND GET FULL CREDIT!
NO, I GET HALF CREDIT!

HEY, LIEUTENANT! I GET HALF CREDIT! IF IT WASN'T FOR ME YOU--
DID YOU SEE THAT! I KILLED HIM! I KILLED THE BLACK KNIGHT OF BERLIN!
THIS IS PISTOL PACKIN' MAMA TO HOME PLATE. ALL SURVIVING BIRDS RETURNING TO BASE, AND MAN DO WE HAVE SOME NEWS FOR YOU WHEN WE GET BACK!
SHUT UP, BOTH OF YOU! WE SAW THE WHOLE THING, AND EACH OF YOU GETS HALF CREDIT PER S.O.P! NOT ANOTHER WORD!

RICHTER?

CAPTAIN HERBERT VON RICHTER?

AH! YOU'RE COMING AROUND. GOOD, GOOD. HELLO, CAPTAIN.

YOU'RE LUCKY TO BE ALIVE

WHA ...

WHAT ...

YOU'RE IN ONE PIECE. A MIRACLE, SIR.

A LOCAL GIRL FOUND YOUR CRASHED PLANE, PULLED YOU OUT BEFORE IT BLEW UP, BUT ...

I'M SORRY.

NO ....

THE EXPLOSION THREW HER INTO A STONE WALL. SHE'S DEAD FROM BLUNT FORCE TRAUMA.

THERE'S NOT A MARK ON HER. BRAIN HEMHORRAGE FROM THE BLUNT FORCE TRAUMA.

I'D LIKE TO SEE HER.

PRETTY YOUNG THING. TO GIVE HER LIFE LIKE THAT, SAVING ONE OF GERMANY'S GREATEST HEROES.

SHE'S IN THE NEXT ROOM.

I WANT TO PAY MY RESPECTS.

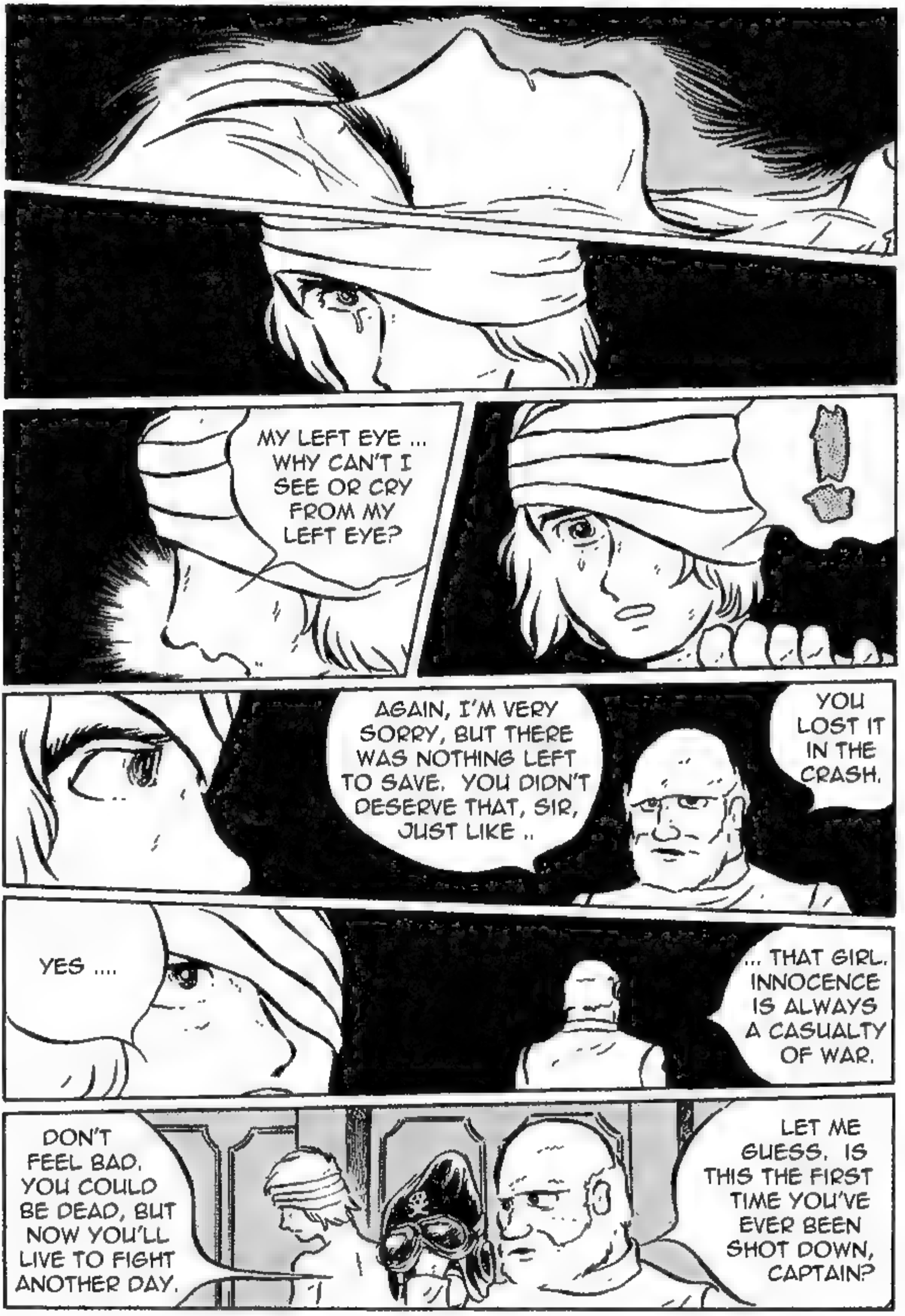
THANK YOU, SIR.

.....

.....

HER NAME WAS MAGARETTE HEMMERI.*

MARGARETTE HEMMERI HAPPENS TO SHARE THE SAME FIRST TWO INITIALS – M.H. – AS GERMAN ACTRESS MARIANNE HOLD, THE REAL LIFE PHYSICAL INSPIRATION FOR ALL OF THOSE BEAUTIFUL SLENDER WOMEN IN MANY A MATSUMOTO TALE. (R.M.)


MY LEFT EYE ... WHY CAN'T I SEE OR CRY FROM MY LEFT EYE?
AGAIN, I'M VERY SORRY, BUT THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT TO SAVE. YOU DIDN'T DESERVE THAT, SIR, JUST LIKE ..
YOU LOST IT IN THE CRASH.
YES ....
... THAT GIRL. INNOCENCE IS ALWAYS A CASUALTY OF WAR.
DON'T FEEL BAD. YOU COULD BE DEAD, BUT NOW YOU'LL LIVE TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY.
LET ME GUESS. IS THIS THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE EVER BEEN SHOT DOWN, CAPTAIN?

I WON'T MAKE THAT MISTAKE AGAIN. AS OF TODAY THE BLACK KNIGHT IS DEAD ... BUT COLONEL HERBERT VON RICHTER STILL LIVES.

I SHOULD BE DEAD. NOT THAT GIRL. NOT MARGARETTE ... AND I'VE LOST AN EYE TOO, AND ALL FOR BEING KIND TO AN ENEMY.

... AND I WILL AVENGE MYSELF ON THOSE AMONG MY ENEMIES WHO WERE THE TRUE CAUSE OF IT!

I WILL ATONE FOR THE DEATH I UNWITTINGLY CAUSED ...

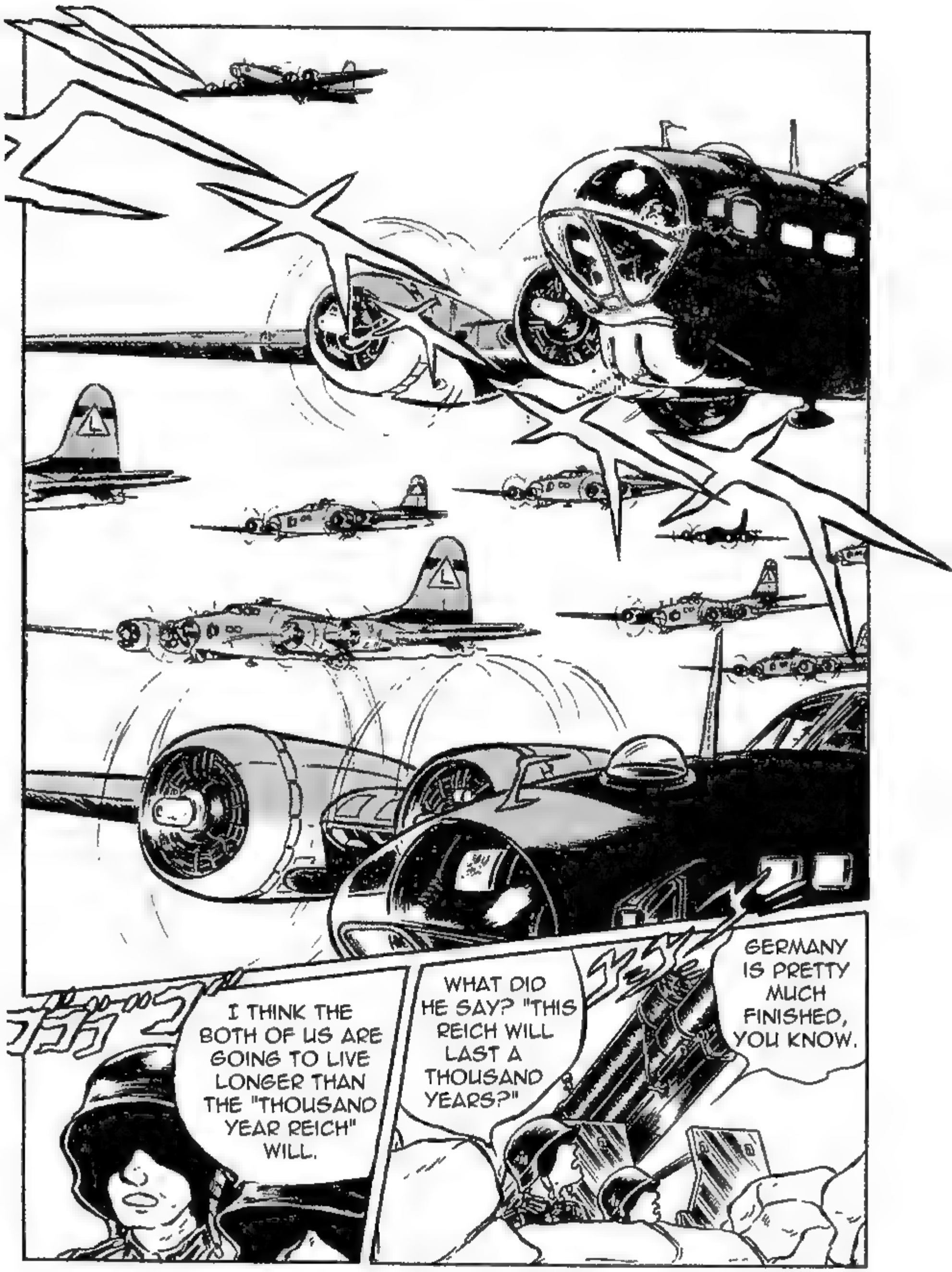
Margaret

HERE LIES THE GERMAN WOMAN
MARGARETTE HEMMERI
ALONG WITH THE LEFT EYE THAT
I LOST AS SHE SAVED ME FROM
THE FLAMES OF MY BURNING PLANE.
MAY HER SPIRIT SOAR FROM THIS
MORTAL WORLD EVEN AS I ONCE
SOARED IN THE SKIES ABOVE.
-- HERBERT VON RICHTER

APRIL 30, 1945
BERLIN

160 BOMBERS ARE ON THEIR WAY, ESCORTED BY 120 FIGHTERS! ALL MEN TO YOUR PLANES!

BUT SIR! WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH PLANES OR PILOTS TO DEFEND BERLIN AGAINST THAT BIG AN ATTACK FORCE!


I THINK THE BOTH OF US ARE GOING TO LIVE LONGER THAN THE "THOUSAND YEAR REICH" WILL.
WHAT DID HE SAY? "THIS REICH WILL LAST A THOUSAND YEARS?"
GERMANY IS PRETTY MUCH FINISHED, YOU KNOW.

!!

DON'T MIND ME, MEN. JUST PASSING THROUGH.

HERE'S ANOTHER ONE FOR YOU. "THEY'LL NEVER BOMB THIS PLACE!" WELL HERE'S TO YOU, MEIER!*

HEY, DID YOU HEAR? THEY GROUNDED HIM. BERLIN'S GREATEST DEFENDER, AND THEY HAD TO GROUND HIM FOR HAVING ONLY ONE EYE!

HE'S ACTING LIKE HE DIDN'T, SO BE THANKFUL AND LET'S WATCH WHAT WE SAY FROM NOW ON, OKAY?

THAT WAS CAPTAIN VON RICHTER, THE BLACK KNIGHT OF BERLIN! HEY, DO YOU THINK HE HEARD US?

DO YOU KNOW WHO THAT WAS?!

NOT QUITE TRUE, SOLDIER, ALTHOUGH I FORGIVE YOU. GOOD PILOTS RELY ON MORE THAN JUST THEIR EYESIGHT, ALTHOUGH IT HELPS.

WELL? YOU GOTTA HAVE TWO EYES TO FLY! I'VE GOT A BROTHER WHO'S A PILOT, AND HE SAYS IT'S BECAUSE YOU NEED DEPTH PERCEPTION. YOU CAN'T DO THAT IF YOU'VE ONLY GOT ONE EYE, SEE? OH, PARDON THE PUN ...

YOU'LL GET TO SEE THAT SOON, MY FRIEND, ONCE THE LUFTWAFFE HAS MY NEW SCHWALBE READY FOR ME TO FLY ....

THERE'S ALSO TRAINING AND INTUITION. WHEN A GOOD PILOT CAN BECOME ONE WITH HIS MACHINE, ONE EYE CAN DO THE JOB.

(*) A WELL-KNOWN BOAST BY REICH MARSHALL HERMANN GOERING THAT ULTIMATELY CAME BACK TO BITE HIM. "IF THEY EVER BOMB THE RUHR THEN YOU CAN CALL ME MEIER!" (PARAPHRASED) THE "THIS PLACE" VERSION COMES FROM THE POPULAR AMERICAN COMEDY SONG "DER FUEHRER'S FACE."

IF WE COULD SPLIT UP THEIR ATTACK THEN WE'D HAVE A BETTER CHANCE.

JUST ENOUGH FOR ONE SORTIE.

HOW ARE WE ON FUEL?

CAPTAIN! THERE YOU ARE! THE AIRFIELD ESCAPED THE BOMBING!

ALL RIGHT. THE NEXT TIME THEY COME WE'LL LAUNCH EVERY PLANE WE HAVE.

TWENTY, SIR.

HOW MANY PLANES DO WE HAVE?

YOU TWO HAD BETTER WATCH OUT! THE NEXT TIME I SEE YOU, YOU'LL BE SITTING DUCKS READY FOR ME!

I WILL NEVER FORGET THE MARKINGS PAINTED ON THOSE TWO AMERICAN AIRPLANES!

NOT LONG AGO YOU SHOT DOWN THE BLACK KNIGHT OF BERLIN, A WARRIOR WHO DID HIS UTMOST TO PLAY BY THE OLD RULES OF WAR, THE GENEROUS AND CHIVALROUS ONES, BUT YOU WOULDN'T LET HIM.

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!!!

IN HIS PLACE A NEW BLACK KNIGHT IS ABOUT TO TAKE THE SKY! ONE WHO WILL SHOW YOU NO MERCY THIS TIME! THE SAME WHO IS GOING TO SEND THE BOTH OF YOU STRAIGHT TO HELL!!!

BECAUSE OF YOUR FOOLISHNESS THE OLD BLACK KNIGHT DIED, AND SO DID AN INNOCENT WOMAN.

RELAX, BUD! THERE'S HARDLY A GERMAN LEFT TO COME UP AFTER US!

PISTOL PACKIN' MAMA TO ALL PLANES! STAY IN FORMATION! I REPEAT, STAY IN FORMATION!

I WOULD BE EXCEPT LT. HAMILTON IS STILL TRYING TO CLAIM ALL THE CREDIT.

SANDERS ... YOU'RE ACTUALLY PROUD OF WHAT YOU DID.

AND BEST OF ALL, THAT CRAZY BLACK KNIGHT DUDE IS GONE TOO!

IT WON'T BE FOR LONG! WITH THE SKIES ABOVE BERLIN CLEAR ALL WE GOTTA DO IS DROP OUR BOMBS AND GO HOME!

IN CASE YOU FORGOT THE WAR IS STILL ON!

RELAX.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING, SANDERS?

COMICS

SOMETHING FLASHED HIGH IN THE SKY AT THREE O'CLOCK.* WAS IT A GERMAN PLANE?

SEE WHAT?

HEY! DID YOU SEE THAT?

(*) - THE WAY AIRMEN REPORTED SIGHTINGS WAS BY USING CLOCK REFERENCES SO EVERYONE WOULD UNDERSTAND. "TWELVE O'CLOCK" WAS STRAIGHT AHEAD, "SIX O'CLOCK" WAS DIRECTLY BEHIND. "TWELVE O'CLOCK HIGH" WAS DIRECTLY AHEAD AND HIGH UP, WHILE "SIX O'CLOCK LOW" WAS DIRECTLY BEHIND AND BELOW. AND SO ON ....

WAIT A MINUTE ... WHAT TH--
THERE'S NOTHING UP THERE!
GERMAN JET PLANES!!!

DON'T DO ANYTHING STUPID OR THEY WILL! NOW CLEAR THE SKIES WHILE YOUR FUEL LASTS! I DON'T WANT THERE TO BE ONE BOMBER LEFT!

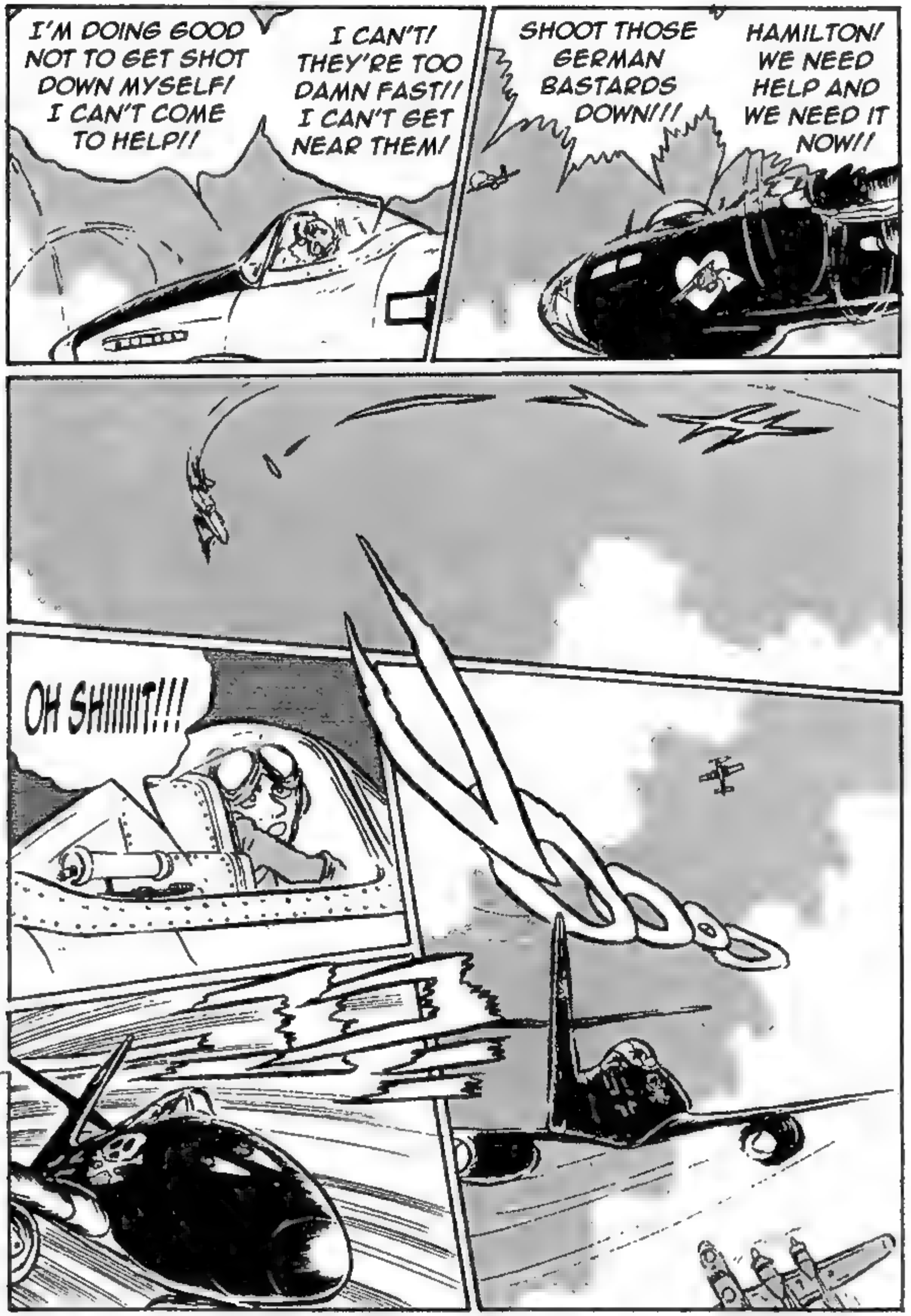
IGNORE THEIR FIGHTERS AND GO STRAIGHT FOR THEIR BOMBERS! THEIR FIGHTERS CAN'T TOUCH YOU!

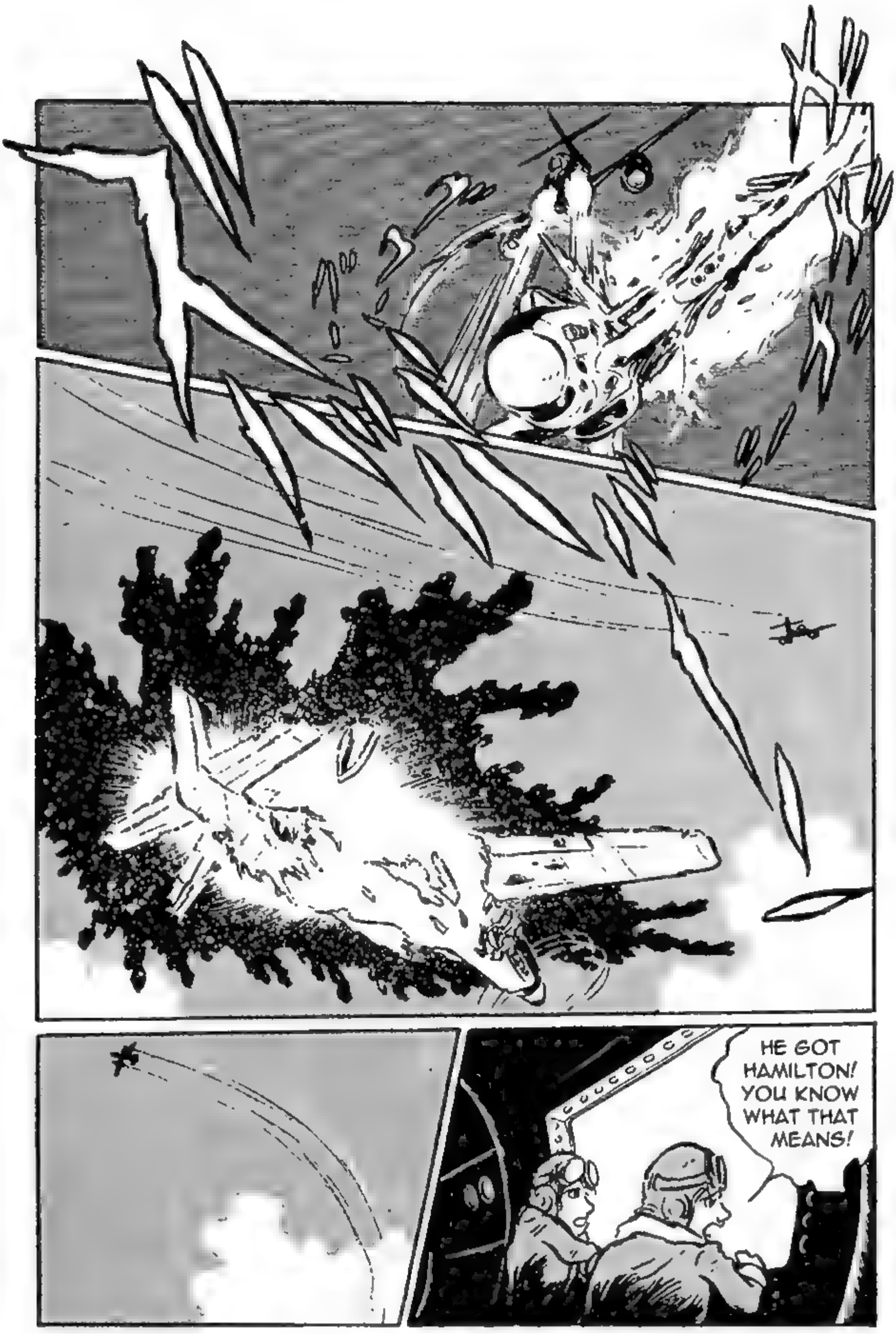
THIS IS CAPTAIN VON RICHTER! LISTEN UP!!

HOLY SHIT! IT'S THE BLACK KNIGHT OF BERLIN!!

HAMILTON! I THOUGHT YOU AND SANDERS SHOT HIM DOWN!!

WE--I DID! ALL OF YOU SAW HIM CRASH AND BURN!! HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD!!!


I'M DOING GOOD NOT TO GET SHOT DOWN MYSELF! I CAN'T COME TO HELP!!
I CAN'T! THEY'RE TOO DAMN FAST!! I CAN'T GET NEAR THEM!
SHOOT THOSE GERMAN BASTARDS DOWN!!!
HAMILTON! WE NEED HELP AND WE NEED IT NOW!!
OH SHIIIIIT!!!



HE GOT HAMILTON! YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS!

AND WE'RE DAMAGED, RIGHT?! AND HE DOESN'T SHOOT DAMAGED PLANES!

BUT HE'S THE BLACK KNIGHT, RIGHT?!

... NO ... NO ... NO, YOU WOULDN'T ... WOULD YOU? I MEAN, YOU'RE THE BLACK KNIGHT, RIGHT! AND I WAS SCARED!! I DIDN'T MEAN IT! HONEST TO GOD!! PLEASE!!!

HEY, WHY'S HE STARING AT ME LIKE THAT, HUH! I MEAN ...

BUT ... BUT LT. HAMILTON WAS ALWAYS TRYING TO CLAIM FULL CREDIT, AND HE'S DEAD NOW!

YES, SANDERS, AND YOU KNOW FULL WELL WHY.

HE'S GONNA KILL US, ISN'T HE?

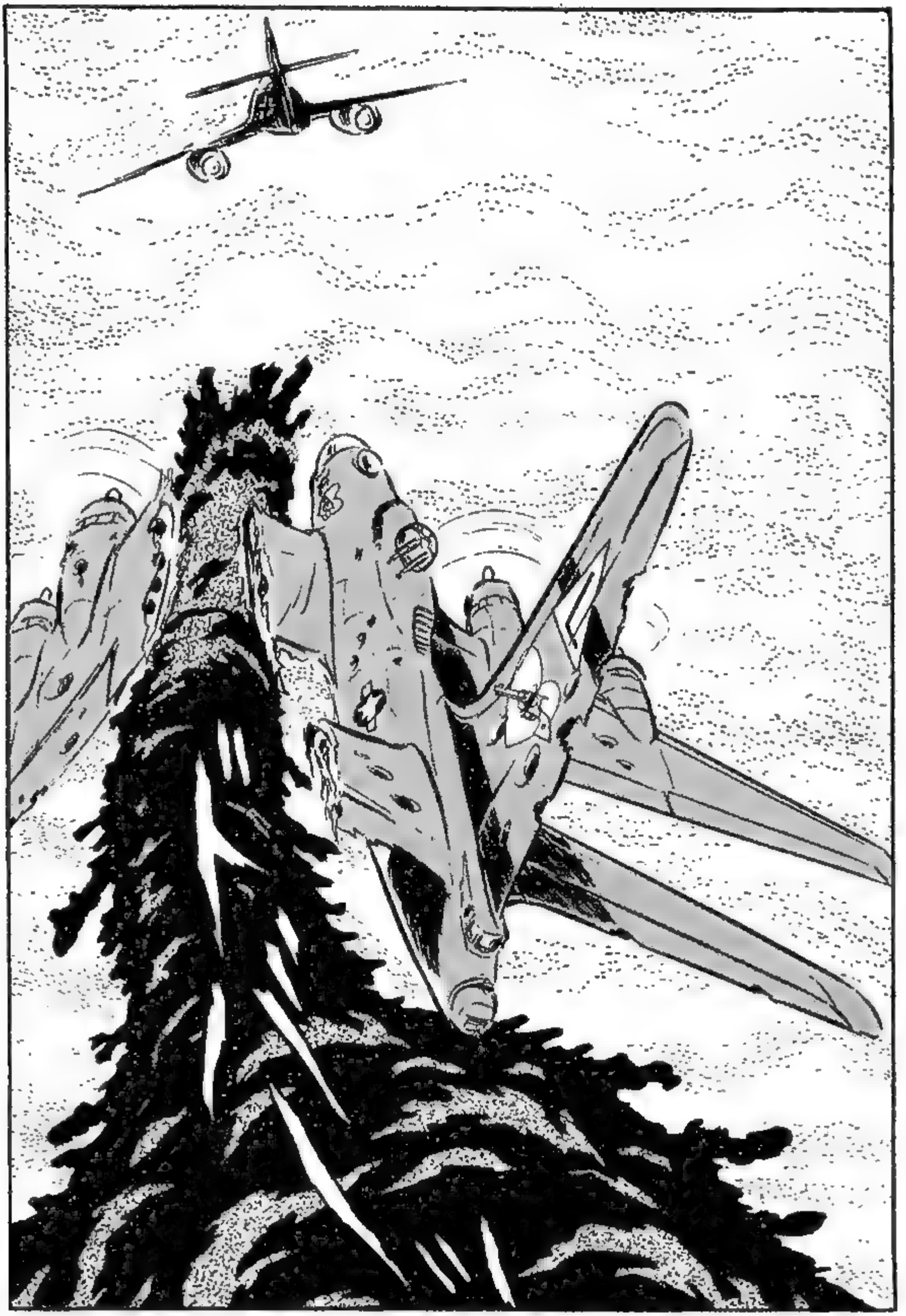
FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, HE DOESN'T HAVE TO KILL US!!!

YOU CAUSED THE BLACK KNIGHT'S DEATH. YOU MADE IT HAPPEN.

I HAVE THE SECOND ONE. TIME TO FINISH THE FIRST ONE.

THE BLACK KNIGHT IS DEAD. I AM CAPTAIN HERBERT VON RICHTER ... YOUR GRIM REAPER, MISTER!

I SEE YOU PLEADING FOR MERCY, WHOEVER YOU ARE, BUT I HAVE NONE TO SHARE.



THE BLACK KNIGHT OF BERLIN

DON'T FOLLOW ME. THE REST OF YOU, LAND AND GO HOME. THE WAR IS ALL BUT OVER.

SIR!!!

SIR?!

SO WHERE WILL THE GRIM REAPER OF THE SKIES GO?

TO THE SKIES OF COURSE!

FAREWELL, MY FELLOW WARRIORS! NEVER FORGET THE BLACK KNIGHT OF BERLIN, AND WHAT HE TRIED TO DO IN THIS WAR!

CAPTAIN VON RICHTER'S BLACK ME-262 SCHWALBE CONTINUED ITS VERTICAL CLIMB, INTO THE SUN AS IT WERE, UNTIL IT WAS LOST FROM SIGHT. WHERE IT ENDED UP NO ONE KNOWS.

IT IS SAID THAT IF YOU VISIT BERLIN ON THAT DAY, AND IF YOU LISTEN CAREFULLY, YOU MIGHT HEAR THE FAINT ROAR OF TWIN JUMO JET ENGINES RACING ACROSS THE SKY.

FOR YOU SEE, GERMANY'S GRIM REAPER STILL KEEPS AN EYE OVER HIS BELOVED LAND, WATCHING AND WAITING TO METE OUT SWIFT JUSTICE TO ANY WHO VIOLATE THE SACRED CODE OF WAR.

THE DATE WAS APRIL 30, 1945 ... THE SAME DAY HITLER TOOK HIS OWN LIFE.

HEY! THESE JUST FELL FROM THE SKY!

DAS ENDE

<Published in Weekly Shonen Sunday, Issue 51, 1974>

LEIJI
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PRESENTS

THE COCKPIT

SHERMAN TANKS, YOU DINGBAT. OPEN YOUR EYES! THOSE ARE OURS!

HEY, WHAT'S THAT?

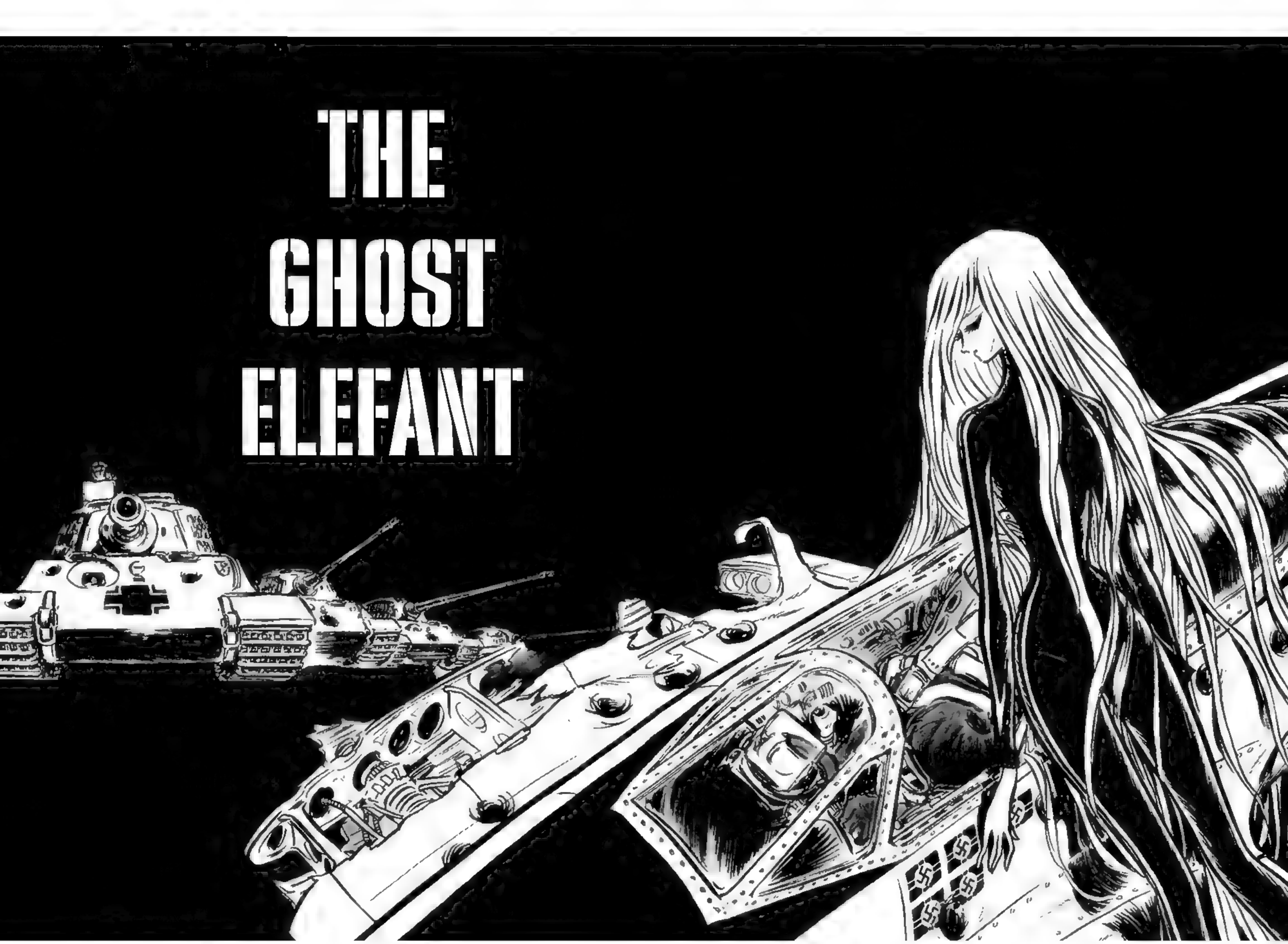
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME NOW.

THE RED ARMY IS ENTERING BERLIN.

THOSE ARE ME-262S!!!

FUCK!!!

THE GHOST ELEFANT



QUICK! CLOSE THE HATCH!!

IT'S A SNIPER!

IT'S TOO LATE. HE'S FINISHED.

POOR G.I. ... OUR KING TIGERS WILL TRUMP YOU EVERY TIME.

NOW I'VE GOT SOME HOPE AGAIN.

UHH ... I FORGOT.

AND YOU'RE HERE FOR?

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, SIR, I'D RATHER NOT DIE INSIDE AN IRON COFFIN.

NEVER MIND. YOU'RE WELCOME TO HITCH A RIDE WITH US, WHILE GALLARD'S* GOT THE AIRSPACE SECURED.

LT. WERNER LESTERMEYER, SIR! FIFTH PLATOON, FIRST BATALLION, 39TH REGIMENT, SIR!

YOU THERE! SNIPER!! NAME AND RANK!!!!

SORRY, BUT WE DON'T HAVE ANY FOOD. GOOD LUCK, MISTER!

THEN HERE'S A LITTLE GIFT.

(*) ADOLF GALLARD, THE TOP GERMAN FIGHTER ACE OF WORLD WAR II.

WELL, THAT'S SOMETHING TO REMEMBER IF I LIVE. THE LAST OPERATIONAL KING TI--

GOOD LUCK, LESTER-MEYER!

YEAH, SORRY.

... AN IRON COFFIN, YOU SAID ... YOU WERE SO RIGHT ....

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE HE RAN OVER ONE OF OUR OWN MINES.

TM20 ANTI-TANK MINE.

HALT!!! WHO ARE YOU?!?! FRIEND OR FOE?!?!

GER.

WELL THERE GOES MY LAST GOOD UNIFORM. ANYWAY, LADY, AS I WAS--
I CAN GET YOU A NEW UNIFORM.
WHERE?!? THIS CITY IS IN RUINS AND YOU'RE ...OH, NEVER MIND.
OH SHIT! WE NEED TO TAKE COVER NOW!!

YOU'RE KIDDING!

BUT I'LL BET IT'S RAN OUT OF FUEL.

AN OLD ELEFANT. LOOKS IN GOOD SHAPE.

YOU STILL HAVEN'T TOLD ME WHO YOU ARE, AND HOW'D YOU KNOW---

EVERY-THING IS RUNNING OUT OF FUEL.

PLEASE FORGIVE THE BULLET HOLES.

YOUR CHANGE OF CLOTHES, LIEUTENANT LESTERMEYER.

AN M4 TANK.

WE'VE GOT VISITORS.

!

MY SIZE TOO! A PERFECT FIT! LADY, THERE'S A LOT ...

THE FÜHRER HAS COMMITTED SUICIDE. THE RUSSIANS ARE HERE. THE THIRD REICH IS IN ITS DEATH THROES. ALL OF THIS IS HISTORICAL FACT -- OR WILL BE SOON.

TELL ME. WHY DO YOU KEEP ON FIGHTING?

HE'S GOT PLENTY OF FUEL.

IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT.

I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THE PARTY. THIS IS MY HOME.

I'D REALLY LIKE TO KNOW.

WERNER LESTERMEYER. NICE TO MEET YOU.

I LIKE THAT. I'M REYA.

YOU LOOK TOTALLY OUT OF PLACE. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

MAKES ME THINK OF MY UNIVERSITY DAYS. MY LAST ACT THERE WAS TO CUT CLASS AND HAVE SEX WITH A GIRL.

YES, AND YOU CAN CALL ME MEIER.

MY UNIVERSITY GOT BOMBED BY B-17S.

PROFESSOR VON BRAUN WOULD HAVE LOVED A CHANCE TO VISIT WITH YOU, REYA.

I'LL GET SOME WATER.

HERE, TAKE THIS.

I WON'T NEED IT, BUT THANK YOU.

SUIT YOURSELF, REYA.

WHAT WAS IT HE SAID?

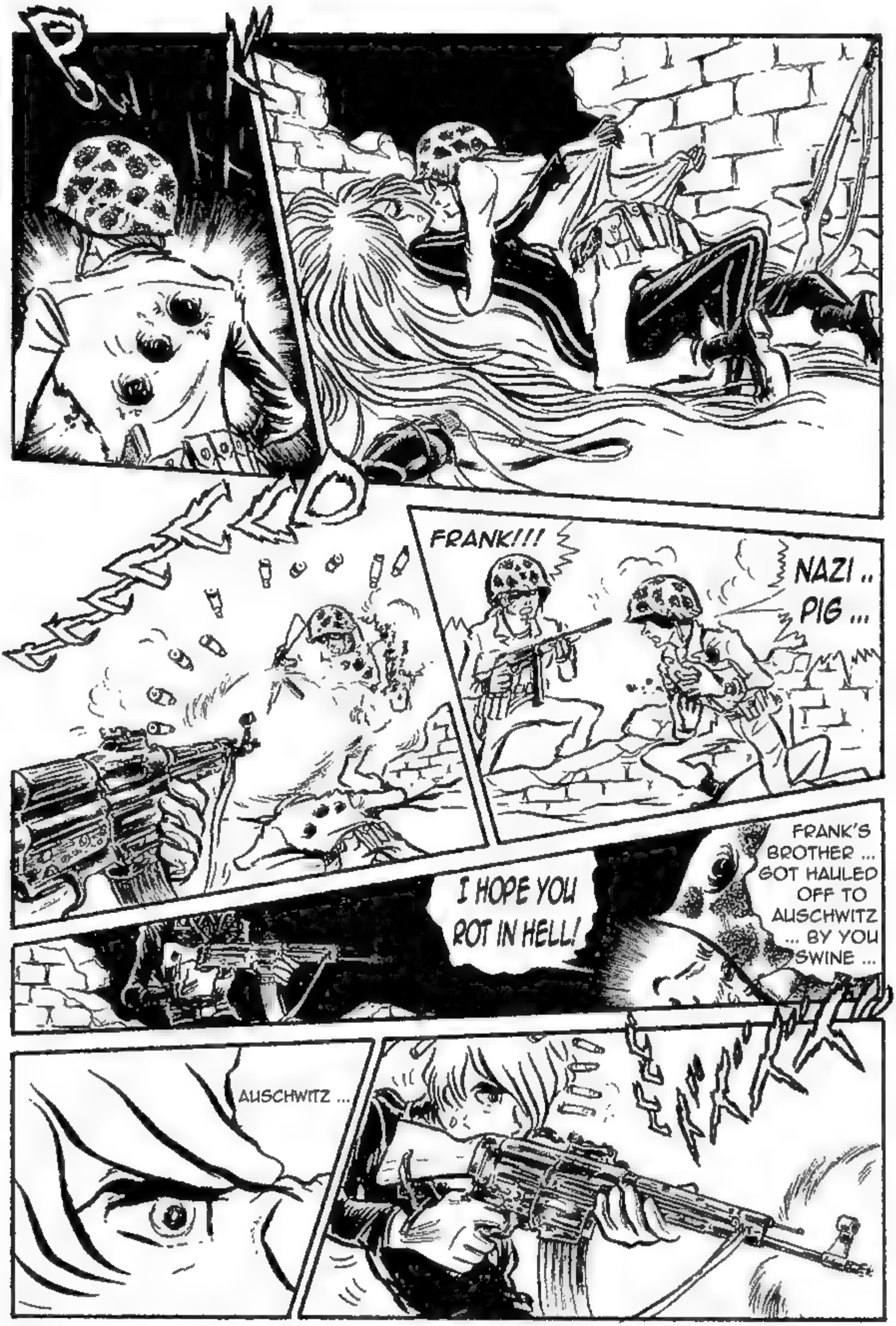
"SOMEONE FROM THE PAST OR FUTURE WOULD NOT ACT LIKE US IN OUR TIME."

ARE YOU DROPPING A RATHER BROAD HINT, LIEUTEN-ANT?

NO, I'M JUST STATING A FACT ... ABOUT ME AND YOU.

HEY! WHO ARE YOU?!?

REYA!!


FRANK!!!
NAZI ..
PIG ...
FRANK'S BROTHER ... GOT HAULED OFF TO AUSCHWITZ ... BY YOU SWINE ...
I HOPE YOU ROT IN HELL!
AUSCHWITZ ...

YES YOU DID. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

I DID WARN YOU.

THE ATOM BOMB, THE WARS TO COME ....

I KNOW YOU'VE LOST THIS WAR. I KNOW ABOUT AUSCHWITZ, TREBLINKA ...

SO WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

I SUPPOSE EVEN THE BEST TIME TRAVELER CAN'T SEE IT ALL.

ABSOLUTELY! I HAVE A THOUSAND QUESTIONS FOR YOU!

CAN WE STILL BE FRIENDS, WERNER?

Z" Z" Z"Z" Z" Z"

OH! ... SO YOU'VE FIGURED ME OUT.

Z Z Z Z Z Z Z

BUT NOW'S NOT THE TIME TO ASK THEM.

SO LITTLE EFFORT. YOU'RE LIKE A WELL OILED MACHINE.

ANOTHER M4. I'LL TAKE IT OUT.

FEW WILL STOP TO THINK ABOUT COMMON SOLDERS OR OUR MACHINES.

I SUPPOSE IN YOUR FUTURE THEY SAY THAT HITLER UNLEASHED A FLOOD OF BLOOD ON THE WHOLE WORLD.

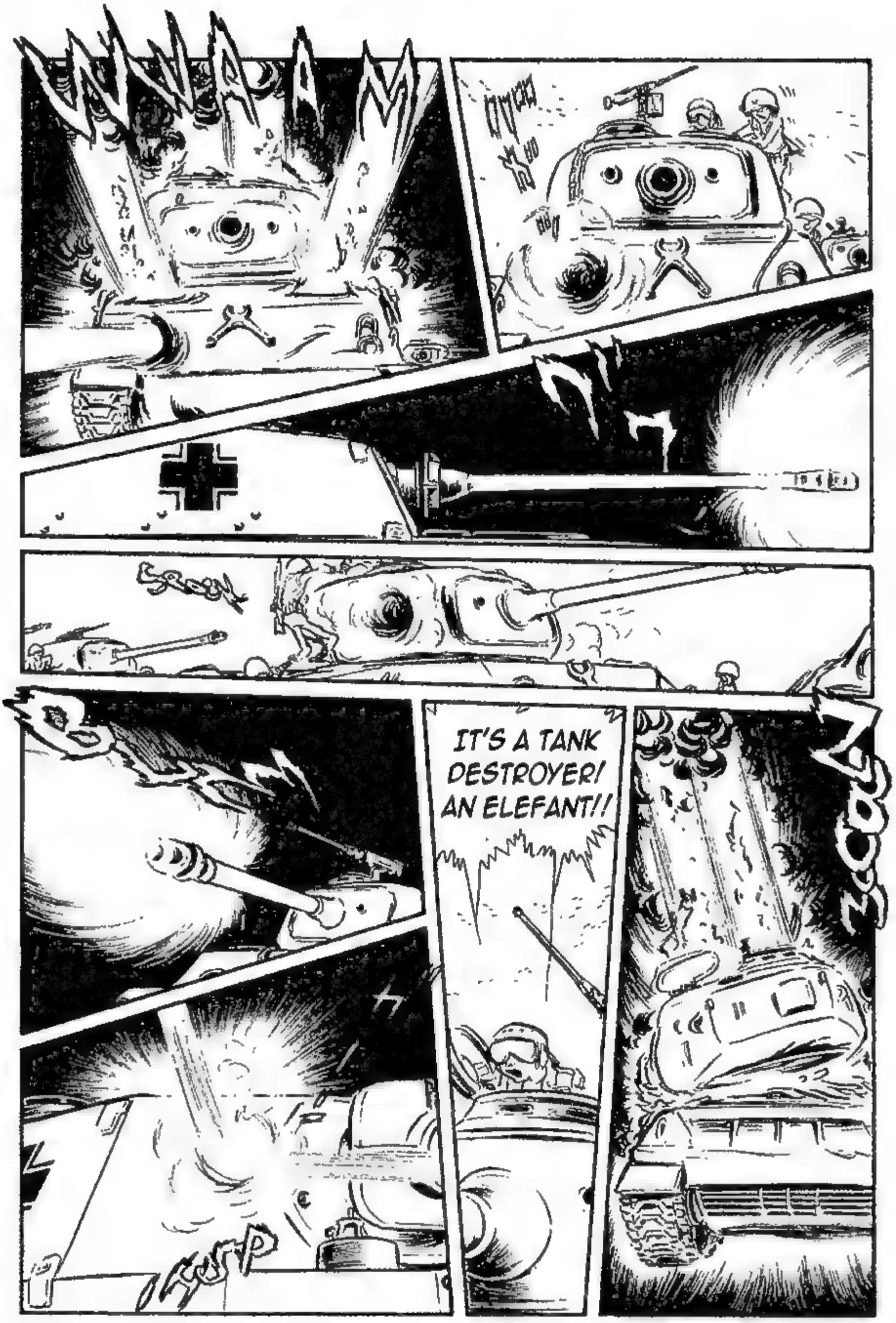
... AND NEVER SEE US GOOD GERMANS.

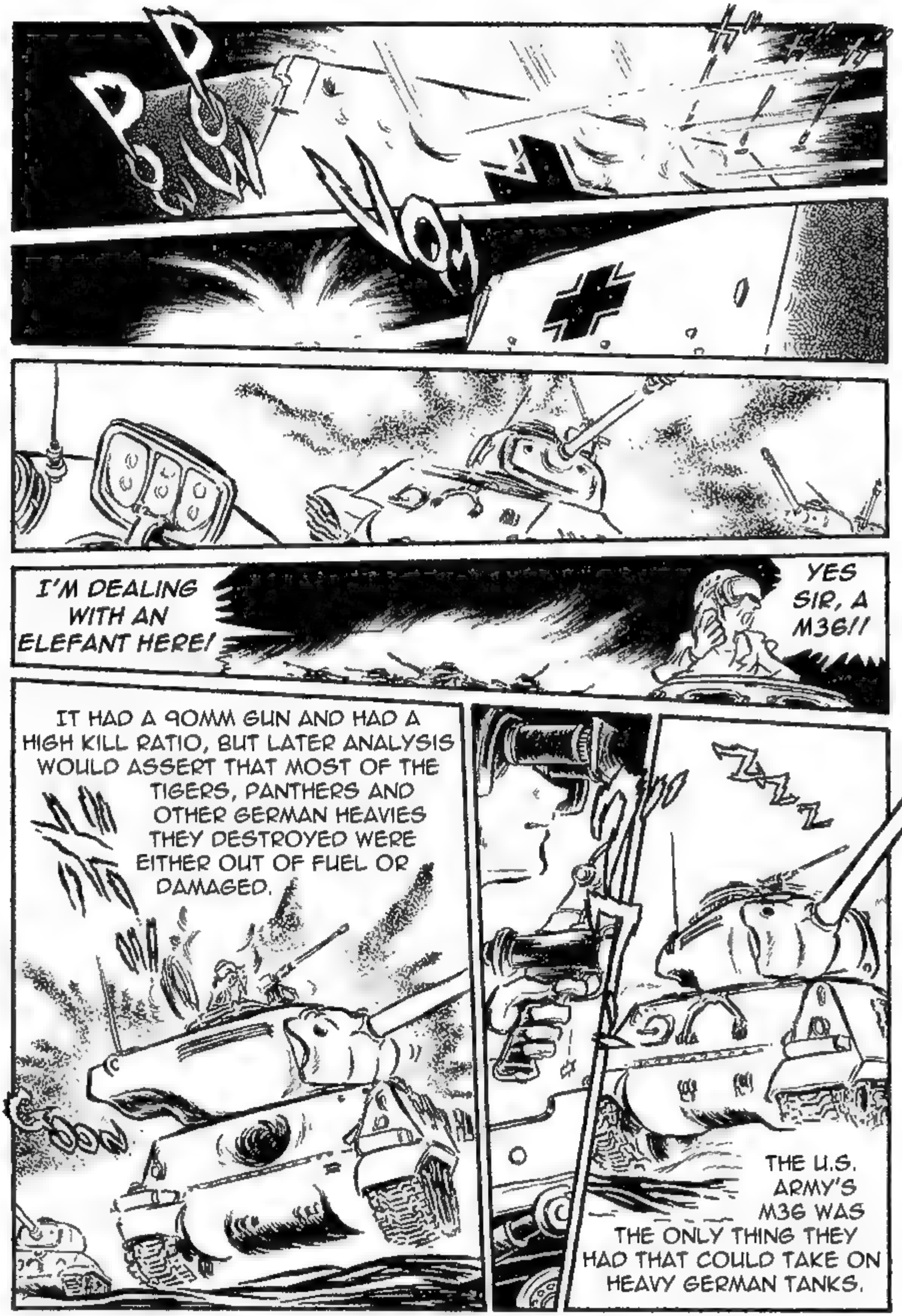
THEY WILL SEE ONLY THE HATRED ...

OH, WERNER ....

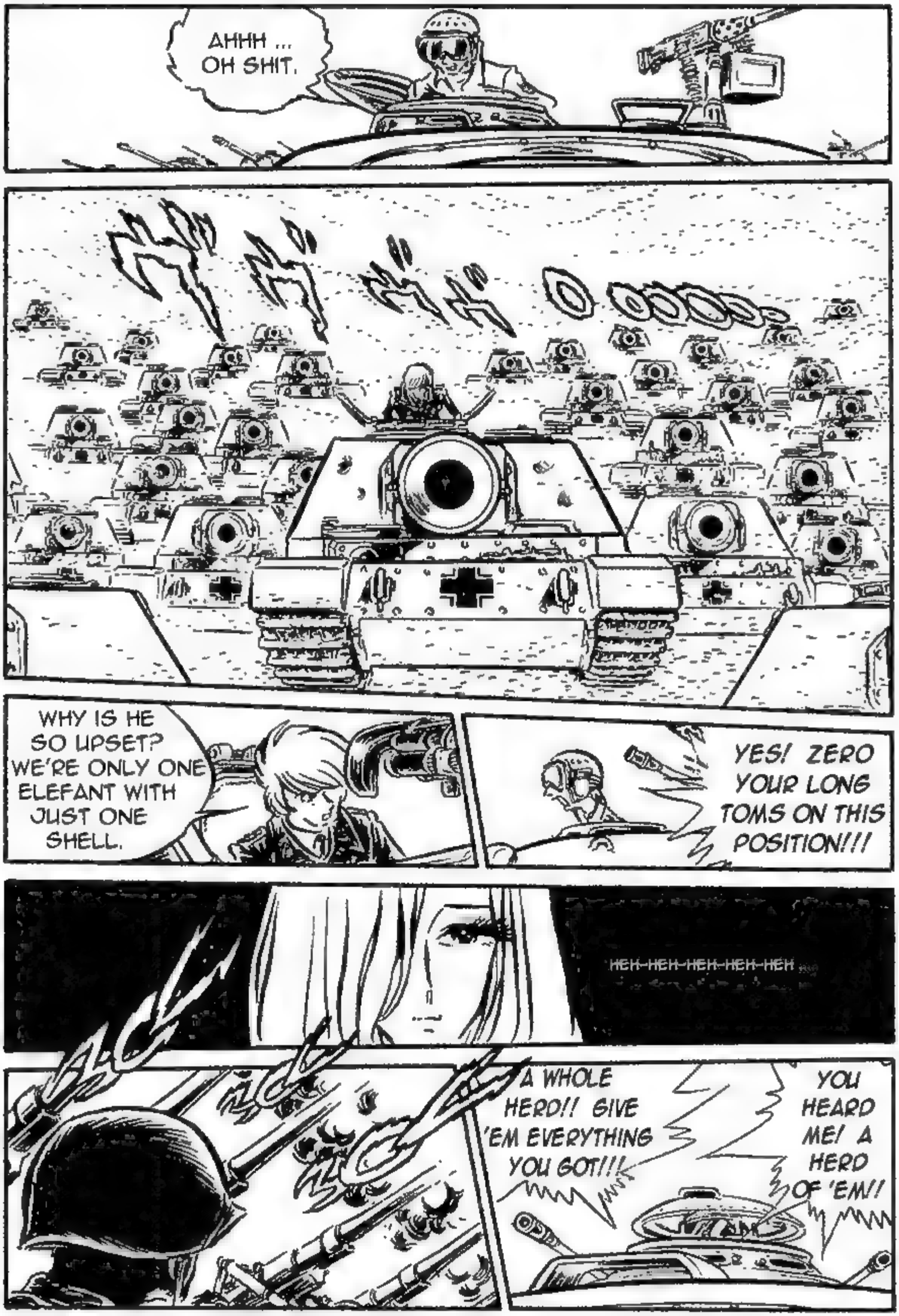
... JUST BECAUSE WE GERMANS DID IT FIRST AND BETTER IN OUR TIME. OR MAYBE THEY'LL LOOT WHAT WE KNOW AFTER THE WAR.

THEY WON'T SEE WHAT WE ACHIEVED IN SPITE OF HITLER, OR EVEN IF THEY DO IT WILL ALWAYS HAVE HIS STAIN ON IT. THEY'LL WANT TO REINVENT THE WHEEL ...


WHAM
IT'S A TANK DESTROYER! AN ELEFANT!!
ZOOM


I'M DEALING WITH AN ELEFANT HERE!
YES SIR, A M36!!
IT HAD A 90MM GUN AND HAD A HIGH KILL RATIO, BUT LATER ANALYSIS WOULD ASSERT THAT MOST OF THE TIGERS, PANTHERS AND OTHER GERMAN HEAVIES THEY DESTROYED WERE EITHER OUT OF FUEL OR DAMAGED.
THE U.S. ARMY'S M36 WAS THE ONLY THING THEY HAD THAT COULD TAKE ON HEAVY GERMAN TANKS.

FURTHERMORE, THE M36 COULD ONLY TAKE OUT THE MOST HEAVILY ARMORED GERMAN HEAVIES BY HITTING THEM AT AN ANGLE WITH ITS 90MM MAIN GUN. THE POOR M4 SHERMAN, WITH ITS FAR WEAKER 75MM MAIN GUN, NEVER HAD A CHANCE.
FIRE IT AND LET'S GO. THE GREAT BEYOND IS WAITING.
THIS IS THE LAST ROUND.
I NEED A TARGET TO HIT FIRST IF I WANT THIS ROUND TO COUNT.
WELL? WHAT'S KEEPING YOU? GO AHEAD AND FIRE!
WHAT A STRANGE CONCEPT. JUST FIRE IT!!!
AFTER THAT I'LL GLADLY DIE, KNOWING THAT I DID MY BEST!


AHHH ... OH SHIT.
WHY IS HE SO UPSET? WE'RE ONLY ONE ELEFANT WITH JUST ONE SHELL.
YES! ZERO YOUR LONG TOMS ON THIS POSITION!!!
HEH-HEH-HEH-HEH-HEH ...
A WHOLE HERD!! GIVE 'EM EVERYTHING YOU GOT!!!
YOU HEARD ME! A HERD OF 'EM!!

EVEN THOUGH THE ELEFANT HAD THE HIGHEST KILL RATIO OF ANY GERMAN TANK DESTROYER AT 10 TO 1, IT TOO HAD ITS WEAKNESSES. ONE OF THOSE WAS THAT ITS ARMOR WAS THINNEST ON ITS TOPSIDES, AS MOST HITS WERE EXPECTED TO BE FROM ENEMY TANKS FIRING FROM ITS SIDES ....

REYA!

(SOUND OF INCOMING ARTILLERY BARRAGE)

WHHHHEEEEEOOOOOOOOO ....

WERNER! HOLD ON TO ME TIGHT!

I OUGHT TO HAVE YOUR HEAD EXAMINED!!!

GODDAMNIT, YOU CALL IN AN ARTILLERY BARRAGE ON JUST ONE OLD GERMAN TANK DESTROYER?!

BUT THERE WAS A WHOLE HERD, SIR, I SWEAR! A WHOLE HERD!!

YOU'RE LUCKY HE WAS GOING TO DIE ANYWAY, OR YOU'D BE SERVING TIME IN A DIMENSIONAL PRISON FOR THAT.
REYA, YOU INTERFERED. A MULTI-LAYERED HOLOGRAM AND SAVING HIM?
HE'S SLEEPING, SIR.
ALMOST ALL OF THEIR LEADERS WERE MADMEN WITH A TERRIBLE DREAM ...
ANYWAY, WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM YOUR TRIP?
... DREAMS OF A BENEFICIAL FUTURE THAT EVENTUALLY LIVED AND SAW THE LIGHT. JUST AS HE DESERVED TO LIVE.
BUT THE LOWER ECHELONS, THEY STILL DREAMED TRUE ...
THAT PRIMITIVE? AS IF I HAD A CHOICE NOW?!?
I THINK HE'LL DO WELL IN OUR TIME, SIR. THAT IS, IF HE'S GIVEN A CHANCE.
EVEN THOUGH HIS HOMELAND WAS DYING AROUND HIM, THE YOUNG LESTERMEYER FOUGHT TO SAVE IT WITH EVERYTHING HE HAD.
THE THIRD REICH MAY HAVE DREAMED A DREAM OF DEATH; BUT HIS AND THAT OF MANY OTHERS WAS A DREAM OF LIFE. IT WAS A DREAM OF A FUTURE FREE OF THE NAZI HELLFIRE ... AND A DREAM THAT, LIKE HIM, DESERVED TO LIVE.

ENDE

<Published in Play Comic, November 22, 1969 issue>

LEIJI
MATSUMOTO
PRESENTS

THE COCKPIT

[redacted] ARCADIA [redacted]

[redacted] PHANTOM & HARLOCK II

[redacted] ON OF THE FAMOUS WORLD WAR I ACE
[redacted] ER TALE FOR ANOTHER TIME

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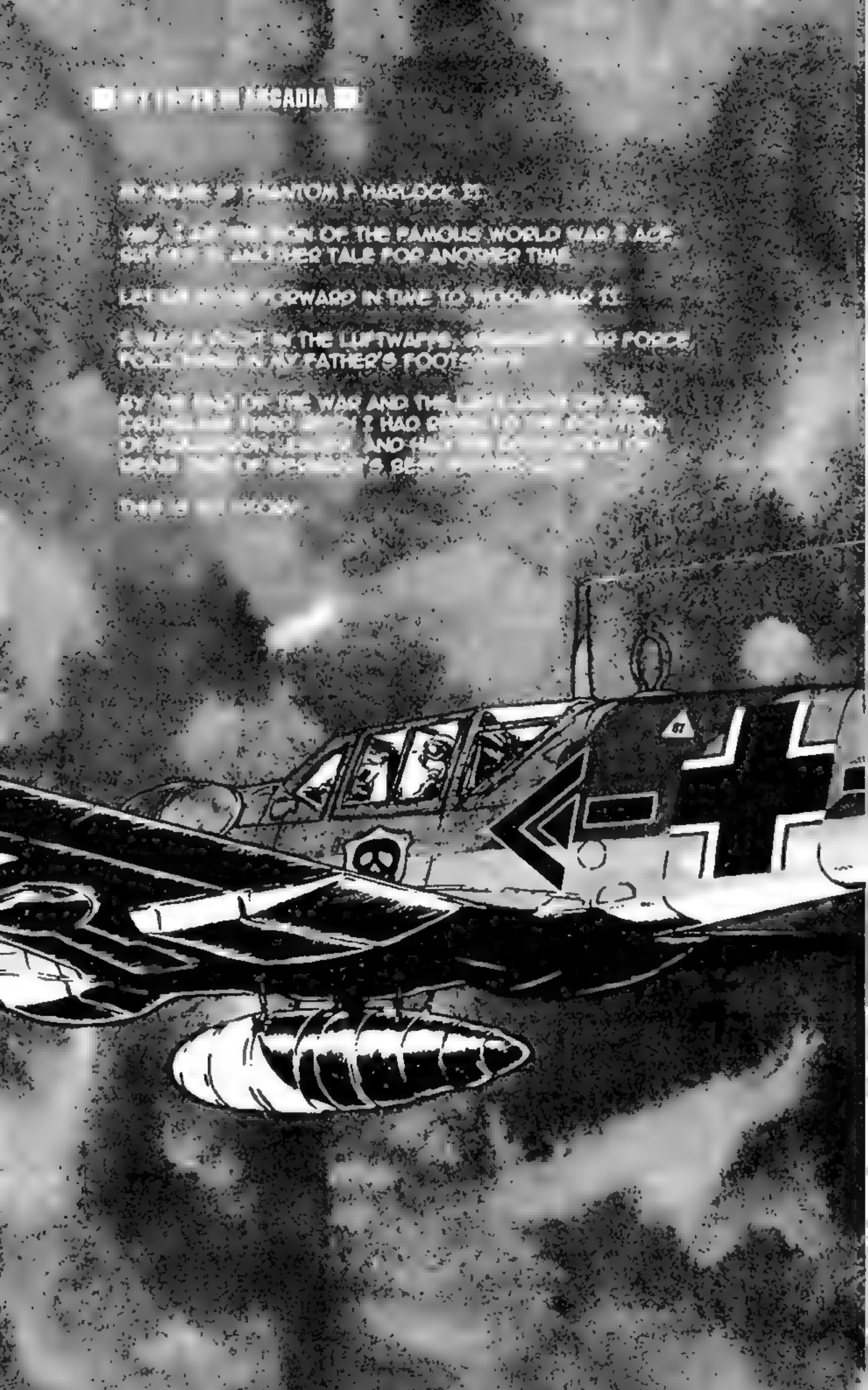


MY YOUTH IN ARCADIA

HITLER AND THE NAZIS WERE DEFEATED, BUT THEY TOOK WITH THEM MILLIONS OF LIVES IN A BLOODBATH THAT WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.
I'M PROUD TO SAY THAT I DID MY PART TO DEFEND THE FATHERLAND, ALTHOUGH BY THIS POINT I WAS

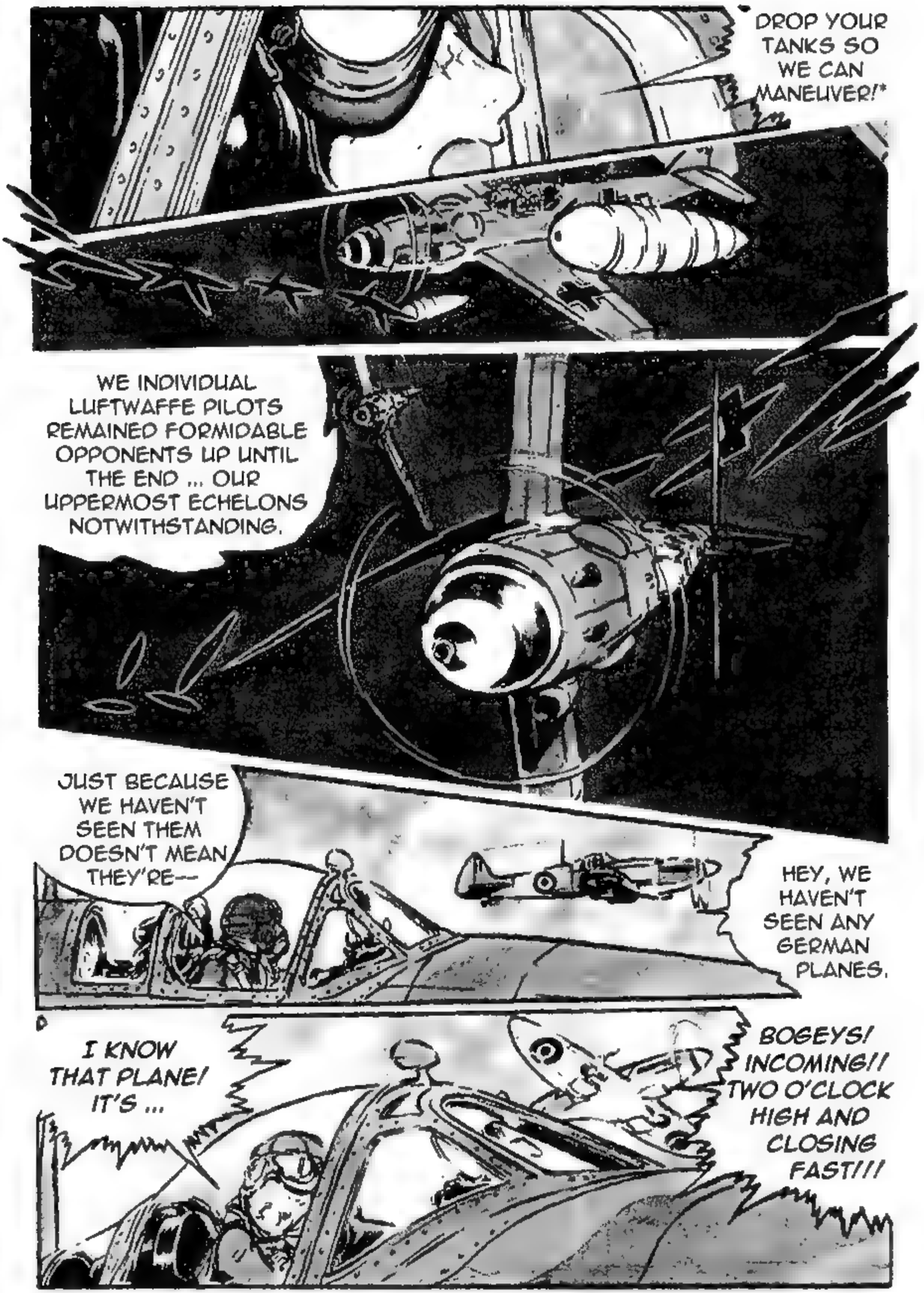
... AND MANY OF THE MEN IN MY FAMILY SINCE MANNED FLIGHT BEGAN.

AND YET I HAD THE BLOOD OF A PILOT AS DID MY FATHER ...

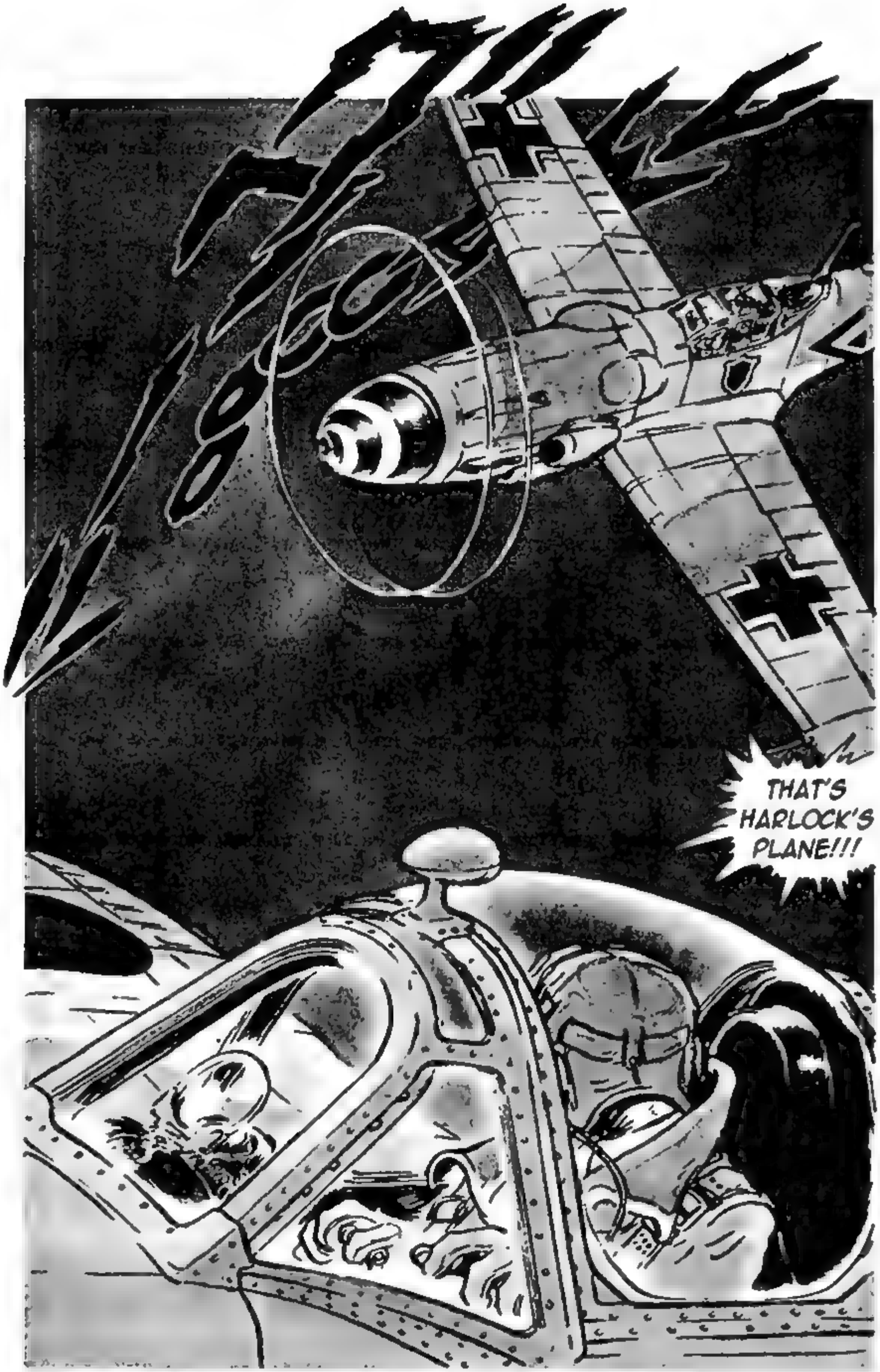
FOR MY YOUNGER SELF THIS WAS MY LIFE, AND I FELT AS ONE WITH GOD WHENEVER I WAS IN THE SKIES.

!

SPITFIRES AHEAD OF US! LET'S GO!!


DROP YOUR TANKS SO WE CAN MANEUVER!*
WE INDIVIDUAL LUFTWAFFE PILOTS REMAINED FORMIDABLE OPPONENTS UP UNTIL THE END ... OUR UPPERMOST ECHELONS NOTWITHSTANDING.
JUST BECAUSE WE HAVEN'T SEEN THEM DOESN'T MEAN THEY'RE--
HEY, WE HAVEN'T SEEN ANY GERMAN PLANES.
I KNOW THAT PLANE! IT'S ...
BOGEYS! INCOMING!! TWO O'CLOCK HIGH AND CLOSING FAST!!!

(*) STANDARD FIGHTER PILOT TACTIC OF THE ERA BUT NEEDED IN THE MESSERSCHMITT BF-109'S CASE, AS THE SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE WAS MORE MANUVERABLE THAN IT WAS IN A DOGFIGHT.


THAT'S HARLOCK'S PLANE!!!

ONE OF ONLY A HANDFUL OF ACES WHO HAVE FOUGHT IN ALL THEATERS OF THE WAR IN WHICH GERMANY HAS FOUGHT!
THAT'S HIS FAMILY CREST!! THERE'S NO MISTAKING IT!!!

BACK THEN I HAD WHAT I CALLED MY "EYE." MY PERSONAL REVI C/12D GUNSIGHT. IT HAD BEEN WITH ME IN FRANCE, NORTH AFRICA, RUSSIA ...

... ANYWERE I WENT, IN ANY PLANE I FLEW, I ALWAYS HAD MY "EYE" WITH ME.

I NEVER SHOWED ANY PITY FOR MY ENEMIES. NOT ONCE. MY "EYE" AND I WERE RELENTLESS.

AS I WATCHED THROUGH MY SIGHT, THE SPITFIRE EXPLODED UNDER MY HAIL OF FIRE. THE PIECES THEN FELL TO EARTH IN A BRIEF HAIL OF METAL, THE LARGER ONES BURNING AS THEY DID.

THE OTHER ONE CUT AND RAN.

WHY? BECAUSE WAR KNOWS NO MERCY, IS NO DISCRIMINATOR OF PERSONS OR CONDITIONS. ALL IT KNOWS IS DEATH AND DESTRUCTION. IF YOU ARE NOT COMFORTABLE WITH THAT FACT THEN YOU SHOULD NEVER WAGE WAR.

... MY REVI C/12D. IT'S WITH HIM IN A FARAWAY COUNTRY NOW, MY FRIEND ... MY TRUE FRIEND ....

THAT WAS LONG AGO. I NO LONGER HAVE MY EYE ANYMORE ...

NOW I'M OLD AND BLIND. I CAN'T SEE ANY MORE. I HAVEN'T SEEN SINCE I LOST MY EYE ... MY EYE ....

Heilgenstaadt
in Oberfranken
April 1976

OH, DAIBA ....

... WAIT FOR THE END TO COME ....

ALL I CAN DO IS WAIT, AS THEY DID BACK THEN ...

LEAVE ME BE, GIRL.
FATHER! PLEASE COME IN! YOU'RE GETTING SOAKED!
SEND HIM AWAY! I'D RATHER BE ALONE.
BUT FATHER, YOU HAVE A VISITOR! HE'S HERE FROM JAPAN TO SEE YOU!
DID YOU SAY JAPAN? .BRING HIM HERE.
I WAS JUST SITTING HERE REMEMBERING THE WAR, AND ...
HE WAS FROM JAPAN. COULD IT BE? COULD IT POSSIBLY BE ... ?

COULD IT BE HIM?

I'M OLD, BLIND, AND CRANKY, SO HOP TO IT!

I HEAR YOU, WHOEVER YOU ARE! YOU'LL HAVE TO COME OVER HERE!

WHO ARE YOU?

OH MY GOD ...

WHAT ARE YOU PUTTING IN--

MY REV! C/12D!

MY EYE! IT'S MY EYE!!

HERE'S THE NEW VISOR ARRAY WHEN I HAD IT UPGRADED!*
I SCRATCHED IT IN MY HURRY TO GET IT OUT OF MY PLANE BEFORE IT EXPLODED!
HERE'S THE SCRATCHES FROM THE CRASH!
WHO ARE YOU? WHY DID YOU BRING THIS BACK TO ME AFTER ALL THIS TIME?!
THIS WAS MY EYE WHEN I WAS YOUNG! WHEN I ... WHEN ...
THIS IS MY REVI C/12D! NO DOUBT ABOUT IT!!
... IS IT YOU, OLD FRIEND?
COULD IT BE? IS IT ...

(*) THE REVI C/12A WAS THE FIRST PRODUCTION MODEL OF THE C/12 SERIES AND WAS STANDARD EQUIPMENT FOR THE MESSERSCHMITT BF-109 AT THE START OF THE WAR. SINCE HARLOCK'S MODEL IS A C/12D AND HE SAYS HE'S HAD IT ALL THROUGH THE WAR, THEN IT IS SAFE TO ASSUME HE HAD IT UPGRADED AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY AS UPGRADES BECAME AVAILABLE. I ALTERED THE TEXT ACCORDINGLY. (R.M.)

IT IS YOU! DAIBA!!

YES ....

YOU'RE ALIVE!! YOU MADE IT!!!

WAIT ....

BUT THE WAR'S BEEN OVER FOR THIRTY YEARS! THAT'S ... THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!!

YOU HAVEN'T AGED A DAY ...

WHO ARE YOU?! AND HOW DID YOU GET MY EYE?!!

WHERE IS MY FRIEND DAIBA?!?!
YOU MUST BE RELATED TO HIM IF YOU LOOK THE SAME!
I'M HIS ELDEST SON, SUSUMU. I'M HERE ON HIS BEHALF.
MY FATHER DIED LAST YEAR, SIR.
DAIBA ... DAIBA IS DEAD?!
NO ....
IT WAS HIS WISH.
IF HE'S DEAD THEN WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
... SO HE ASKED ME BEFORE HE DIED TO COME IN HIS PLACE AND BRING THAT BACK TO YOU.
MY FATHER HAD SAVED FOR THE TRIP BUT OLD AGE CAUGHT HIM FIRST ...
... TO TALK, TO VISIT, TO REMINESCE ABOUT HOW WE FIRST MET ....
I WANTED TO SEE HIM AGAIN ONE LAST TIME ...
DAMMIT, NO! OH NO, NO, NO! NOT DAIBA TOO!!

BUT YOU PUTTING MY EYE BACK INTO MY HANDS AFTER ALL THESE YEARS ... MY BELOVED REVI C/12D ... I MAY NO LONGER BE ABLE TO SEE IT BUT I KNOW IT BY TOUCH. I'M AT A LOSS FOR THE RIGHT WORDS. THANK YOU, YOUNG DAIBA ....

I'VE NEVER CRIED BEFORE OTHERS UNTIL NOW.

... AND THANK YOU, MY OLD FRIEND, WHEREVER YOU ARE NOW IN THE AFTERLIFE ... MY EYE ....

SIR! AMERICAN TANKS HAVE OVERRUN OUR AIRFIELD!! WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?!

HARLOCK! DON'T COME BACK HERE! WE'VE GOT AMERICANS EVERYWHERE! THEY'RE CRUSHING THE SPARE PLANES!

GO TO THE EMERGENCY AIRSTRIP AT THE AUTOBAHN! THEY'VE GOT OLDER PLANES BUT PLENTY OF FUEL! GOOD LUCK-- YAAAAHHH!!--

LET'S GO BREAK UP THEIR PARTY.

LT. SPANDAU HERE, SIR! I'M ALMOST OUT OF FUEL!!

HERE'S THE PLAN.

POOR FOXES, TRYING TO RUN WITH US TIGERS. THEY HAVE THE AIRPLANE BUT NOT THE RANGE .

BY THE WAY, GOOD JOB HELPING WITH THOSE SPITFIRES.

I'M AWARE OF IT, LIEUTENANT. THANK YOU.

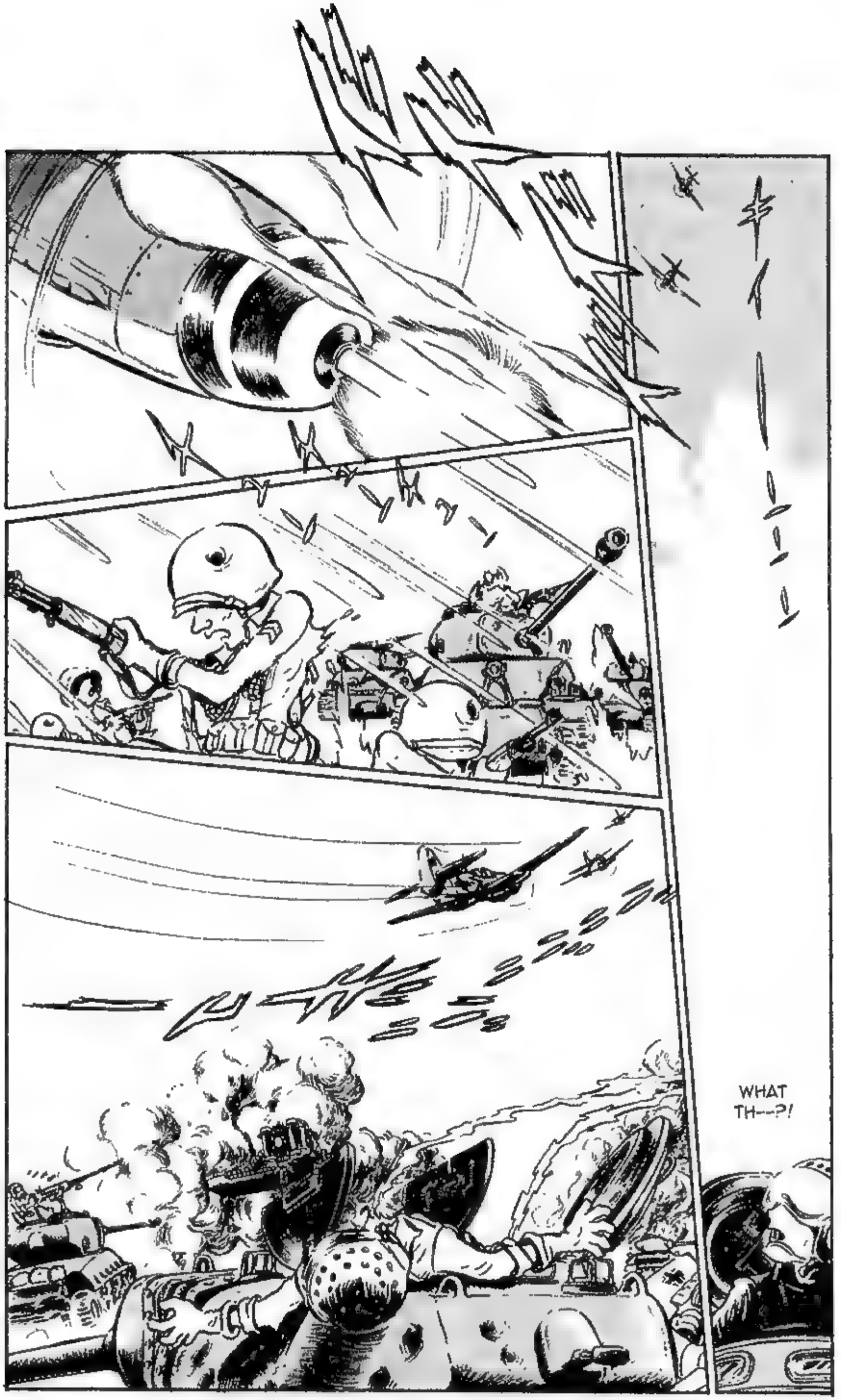
AFTER THAT, IT'S ON TO THE EMERGENCY AIRSTRIP AT THE AUTOBAHN TO REFUEL AND REARM.

WE MAKE ONE LOW PASS, STRAFING EVERYTHING IN SIGHT.

IF THIS WORKS, THEY'LL BE SO CONFUSED WE'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME AT THE AUTOBAHN!

MAKE EVERY SHELL YOU FIRE COUNT!

FUCK YOU AND THAT GERMAN SWILL YOU CALL BEER!!! I'LL TAKE GOOD OL' AMERICAN WHISKEY ANY DAY!!!


WHAT
TH--?!

YES SIR. THEN AGAIN THIS WAR HAS BEEN FULL OF STRANGE THINGS.

I NEVER IMAGINED I'D BE STRAFING THE SAME AIRBASE FROM WHICH I TOOK OFF JUST AN HOUR AGO, SPANDAU.

THE AUTOBAHNS OF GERMANY HAD BEEN BUILT IN TIMES OF PEACE BUT WITH POTENTIAL MILITARY USE IN MIND ...

THEY HAD BEEN BUILT FOR USE BY HEAVY TRANSPORT TRUCKS, WHICH MEANT THEY COULD ALSO DOUBLE AS EMERGENCY AIRSTRIPS ....

THE AUTO-BAHN! LET'S LAND!

I MUST HAVE TAKEN TOO MUCH BATTLE DAMAGE DOWN THERE!
MY LEFT WHEEL! IT WON'T LOCK DOWN!!
THE REST OF YOU ABORT! GIVE ME ROOM!
SHIT! THERE IT GOES!!
SIR! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!

IT'S JUST A GUNSIGHT! THEY HAVE SPARES OF THOSE!!

I'VE GOT TO SAVE MY EYE FIRST!

NOT YET!

IT'S ON FIRE! GET OUT BEFORE IT BLOWS!

IT'S NEVER LET ME DOWN! NOW I WON'T LET IT DOWN!!

THE UKRAINE, THE BALKANS, FRANCE, AND AT THE LAST MY SACRED HOME!

BRITAIN, NORTH AFRICA, RUSSIA ...!

IT'S NOT JUST ANY GUNSIGHT! IT'S MY EYE! IT'S BEEN WITH ME MY ENTIRE CAREER ...

WOOOOW

IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT. YOU WERE TOO SHOT UP. YOUR DAMAGED HYDRAULIC STRUTS COULDN'T TAKE THE STRAIN OF LANDING.

I'VE NEVER CRASHED BEFORE.

THAT'S A PRETTY BOLD THING TO SAY FOR A NON-GERMAN. WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?

THEN AGAIN, THEY SAY GERMAN STUFF ISN'T AS GOOD AS IT USED TO BE BEFORE THE WAR.

TSYOUSHI DAIBA. I CAME HERE IN A SUB FROM NIKON* ON A TECHINICAL EXCHANGE.

NO COCKPIT ARMOR, NO SELF-SEALING FUEL TANKS AGAINST BATTLE DAMAGE? WE'D HAVE LOST THAT FIGHT EARLY!

I'D BE DEAD IF I HAD.

IF YOU HAD FLOWN OUR PLANES INSTEAD OF YOURS, YOU MIGHT HAVE WON THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN.

THAT'S WHAT I'D EXPECT FROM A GERMAN, BUT LET ME TELL YOU.

WE DON'T NEED TO LEARN ANYTHING FROM YOU.

SNORT!

(*) YES, THAT NIKON -- NIPPON KOGAKU, KNOWN PRIMARILY FOR HIGH-END CAMERAS TODAY BUT MAKERS OF SOME OF THE BEST MILITARY OPTICAL SIGHTS AND RANGEFINDERS OF WORLD WAR II.

FLIGHT CAPTAIN* PHANTOM F. HARLOCK, ONE OF GERMANY'S MOST EXPERIENCED FIGHTER ACES!

TOUCHÉ, HARLOCK! YES, I KNOW WHO YOU ARE. THE GROUND CREW POINTED YOU OUT TO ME. IT'S A REAL HONOR, SIR!

HELL NO. HE WAS A FARMER.

WHIZZZZ

I'M CURIOUS. WAS YOUR FATHER A SAMURAI, DAIBA?

GOT MY OWN, THANKS.

CARE FOR A DRINK?

FOR THE FIRST TIME I'LL HAVE TO SWITCH TO AN OLD ONE. WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF OPTIONS.

WHENEVER I NEEDED A NEW PLANE BEFORE, ALL I HAD TO DO WAS SWITCH TO A NEW ONE.

I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR PLANE.

YEAH.

TAKE ME TO THE NEWEST ONE YOU'VE GOT.

(*) GERMAN *STAFFELKAPITAN*, A SENIOR OFFICER WHO COMMANDS AN AIRCRAFT SQUADRON, OR *STAFFELFÜHRER* IN THE CASE OF A JUNIOR OFFICER OR NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER. NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH THE ENGLISH TERM "FLIGHT CAPTAIN," AS IN THE LEADER OF ANY AIRPLANE CREW.

WE'VE GOT THE SAME PROBLEM WITH OUR PLANES TOO AS THIS WAR DRAGS ON.

HMMM. MOSTLY "GUSTAVS," EVEN A FEW "EMILS." DEFINITELY NOT THE QUALITY OF MY "KÜRFUST."

I'M SORRY, SIR. THERE'S NO ONE TO REPAINT THEM.

AND THE SQUADRON MARKINGS?

MAKE SURE THE OTHERS ARE TOO.

SIR, YOUR NEW PLANE IS BEING FUELED.

THEY'RE STILL REGROUPING FOLLOWING YOUR ATTACK, SIR, BUT THEY'LL BE ON THE MOVE SOON.

AND THE ENEMY?

I'M PRETTY GOOD WITH A BRUSH. ALLOW ME.

YOU WANT THIS, RIGHT?

THEN YOU BETTER START NOW, DAIBA.

I'LL NEED ABOUT AN HOUR.

29 (*) SOME OF THE MORE SUCCESSFUL LATER VARIANTS OF THE MESSERSCHMITT BF-109. THE "EMIL" (BF-109E) WAS THE FIRST PRODUCTION VERSION AT THE START OF THE WAR. THE "GUSTAV" (BF-109F) WAS PERHAPS THE MOST PROLIFIC EARLY WARTIME VERSION. THE "KURFURST" (BF-109K) WAS THE FINAL VERSION AND BEGAN ENTERING SERVICE IN NUMBERS IN EARLY 1944.

"PIRATE-KNIGHTS ...." SOUNDS IMPRESSIVE!

THAT'S THE FAMILY CREST OF THE HARLOCK CLAN, THE PIRATE-KNIGHTS OF ARCADIA.

... WHO FAMILY LEGEND SAYS INVENTED THAT SYMBOL, THE JOLLY ROGER, AND FLEW IT AS HIS FLAG AS HE LEFT THE HOLY LAND.

THE FIRST HARLOCK WAS A CRUSADER KNIGHT ...

HE WAS THE CAPTAIN OF THE BLACK SQUADRON, SECOND ONLY TO THE FLYING CIRCUS IN FAME.

WE'VE FLOWN THAT FLAG EVER SINCE. MY FATHER FLEW IT IN THE FIRST WAR.

AND MANY OTHER PLACES AROUND THE WORLD, HIM AND HIS TRUSTY BIPLANE "ARCADIA."

AFTER THE WAR HE BECAME AN AERIAL ADVENTURER. HE WENT TO AFRICA* ...

SADLY WE LOST HIM ON HIS THIRD AND LAST ATTEMPT TO FLY OVER THE OWEN STANLEY MOUNTAINS.**

(*) REF. THE MANGA SHORT "THE BIRD MEN OF KILIMANJARO"
(**) REF. THE MANGA SHORT "THE OWEN STANLEY WITCH"

HE STILL INSPIRES ME, THOUGH. THAT'S WHY I PUT THE FAMILY CREST ON MY PLANE TOO.

ARCADIA

HE DIDN'T HAVE THE FUEL LEFT TO LAND SAFELY.

UNFORTUNATELY I HAD ONLY THE CREST ON MY LAST PLANE, INSTEAD OF THE CREST AND NAME.

THE LAST GUY WHO DID THAT FOR ME WASN'T GOOD WITH LETTERS.

YOU SAID IT HAD THE WORD "ARCADIA" TOO?

OH?

ACTUALLY, I GOT INTO BOTH PAINTING AND LETTERING AS HOBBIES.

THIS TIME YOU'LL HAVE BOTH.

BECAUSE IT'S NOT MINE, MY REVI C/12D. YOU CAN HAVE IT IF YOU WANT.

WHY'D YOU DO THAT?! YOU BROKE IT, YOU NITWIT! AWW, MAN ....

HEY!!!

NOT REALLY, BUT WHATEVER WORKS FOR YOU, I GUESS.

I WANT MY EYE UP THERE WITH ME, NOT SOMEONE ELSE'S. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

OH ...

IT'S AN "ACE" THING,* TRUST ME.

OUR AGM FIGHTER USES A GUNSIGHT DERIVED FROM THE REVI!

BUT OF COURSE!

SO DO THINGS LIKE GUNSIGHTS FASCINATE YOU, DAIBA?

... BUT THE LAB WHERE I WAS AT WAS BOMBED AND DESTROYED MY PROTOTYPE.

MY GOVERNMENT SENT ME OVER HERE TO STUDY THE NEW REVIS SO I COULD MAKE A BETTER ONE FOR US ....

... I'LL MAKE AN EVEN BETTER GUNSIGHT FOR OUR FIGHTERS THAT MIGHT HELP US LAST A WHILE LONGER.

I'LL TAKE THIS BACK WITH ME AND START ALL OVER AGAIN, AND FROM THIS AND WHAT I REMEMBER FROM BEFORE ...

(*) TOP PILOTS HAVE BEEN CLAIMING FAITH IN LUCKY CHARMS AND OTHER SUCH THINGS EVER SINCE WORLD WAR I. EVEN TODAY SOME PILOTS INDULGE IN THESE CHARMS' DESCENDANTS - COCKPIT MASCOTS. OTHERS HAVE LUCKY OUTFITS OR ARTICLES OF CLOTHING, CERTAIN PRE-FLIGHT RITUALS, AND SO ON.

JUST LIKE YOU GUYS ARE NOW.

SO YOU THINK JAPAN IS GOING TO LOSE ITS SIDE OF THE WAR TOO.

WE'RE BOTH RUNNING OUT OF RESOURCES. THE ALLIES ARE SEEING TO THAT.

IT'S NOT OUR FAULT NO MATTER HOW HARD WE TRY.

DON'T RUB IT IN.

YOU KNOW, I WANTED TO MAKE ROCKET CAMERAS BEFORE THE WAR. NOW I MAKE GUNSIGHTS.

ALL DONE! HOW IS IT?

ARCADIA

I'M SURE YOU'LL THINK OF SOMETHING.

BUT THERE'S NO TIME FOR ALL YOUR KILL MARKS ON THE TAIL.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

THAT'S INCREDIBLE! YOU'RE REALLY GOOD, YOU KNOW?

A NAKED WOMAN ....

HOW 'BOUT A NEKKID WOMAN, LIKE AN AMERICAN PLANE?

SUIT YOURSELF. HIS LOSS.

SOMEHOW I DON'T THINK THE FÜHRER WOULD APPROVE.

NO. BAD VIBES.

HOW 'BOUT "BEETHOVEN LOVES TSICHOV-SKY?"

WHAT IS IT?*

OKAY, SOME-THING I CAN DO QUICK.

IT'S A TSUBA*, A GOOD LUCK SIGN!

BUT WHAT IS THIS INSIDE THE IRON CROSS?

THAT'S GREAT!

THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM!

I'LL TREAT IT AS IF IT WERE MY OLD ONE.

DON'T WRECK THIS PLANE TOO!

(*) IT'S A *HENOHENOMOHEJI*, A JAPANESE "SMILEY FACE" MADE FROM SEVEN DIFFERENT HIRAGANA CHARACTERS. USUALLY SEEN ON JAPANESE SCARECROWS, HANDMADE *TERU TERU BOZU* DOLLS MEANT TO SCARE OFF EVIL, AND SO ON.

(**) THE HILT GUARD OF A SAMURAI SWORD, MEANT TO WARD OFF EVIL.

THEY REGROUPED A LITTLE FASTER THAN EXPECTED.

IT'S AN AMBUSH! THAT ENEMY TANK UNIT FROM BEFORE!

JA WOHL!

GET THESE PLANES GOING BEFORE WE'RE DESTROYED ON THE GROUND!!!

SUPPLY GROUP! FALL BACK TO YOUR NEXT SUPPORT POSITION!!!

I WANT ALL PLANES WITH PILOTS IN THE AIR!!!

REMEMBER OUR FUEL SHORTAGE! USE UP EVERYTHING IN YOUR AUXILIARY TANKS BEFORE DROPPING THEM!

GO TO WIESBADEN WITH THE SUPPLY CONVOY! IT SHOULD BE SAFE THERE!

BUT THERE'S NOWHERE FOR ME TO GO! I'M A JAPANESE MAN IN GERMANY!

DAIBA! WHAT IS IT?! YOU NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE!!

TRUE.

THE GERMAN ARMY ISN'T GOING TO LAST MUCH LONGER!

DIDN'T YOU HEAR? THE AMERICANS OVERRAN WIESBADEN LAST WEEK!

DAIBA! GET OVER HERE! I'LL FLY YOU OUT OF HERE IN MY PLANE!! HURRY!!!

BUT NOT ME ... AND I'VE GOT AN IDEA.

IT'S OUT OF FUEL TOO.

EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE IS RUNNING OUT OF FUEL. THE THIRD REICH IS FINISHED.

WATCH OUT!!!

AN ME-163.

THIS WASN'T DESIGNED FOR PASSENGERS SO LIVE WITH IT. HERE YOU GO!

OOOFF!! THIS IS AS SMALL AS MY HOUSE BACK HOME!

BOOT!

I'M JUST GLAD FOR THE RIDE!

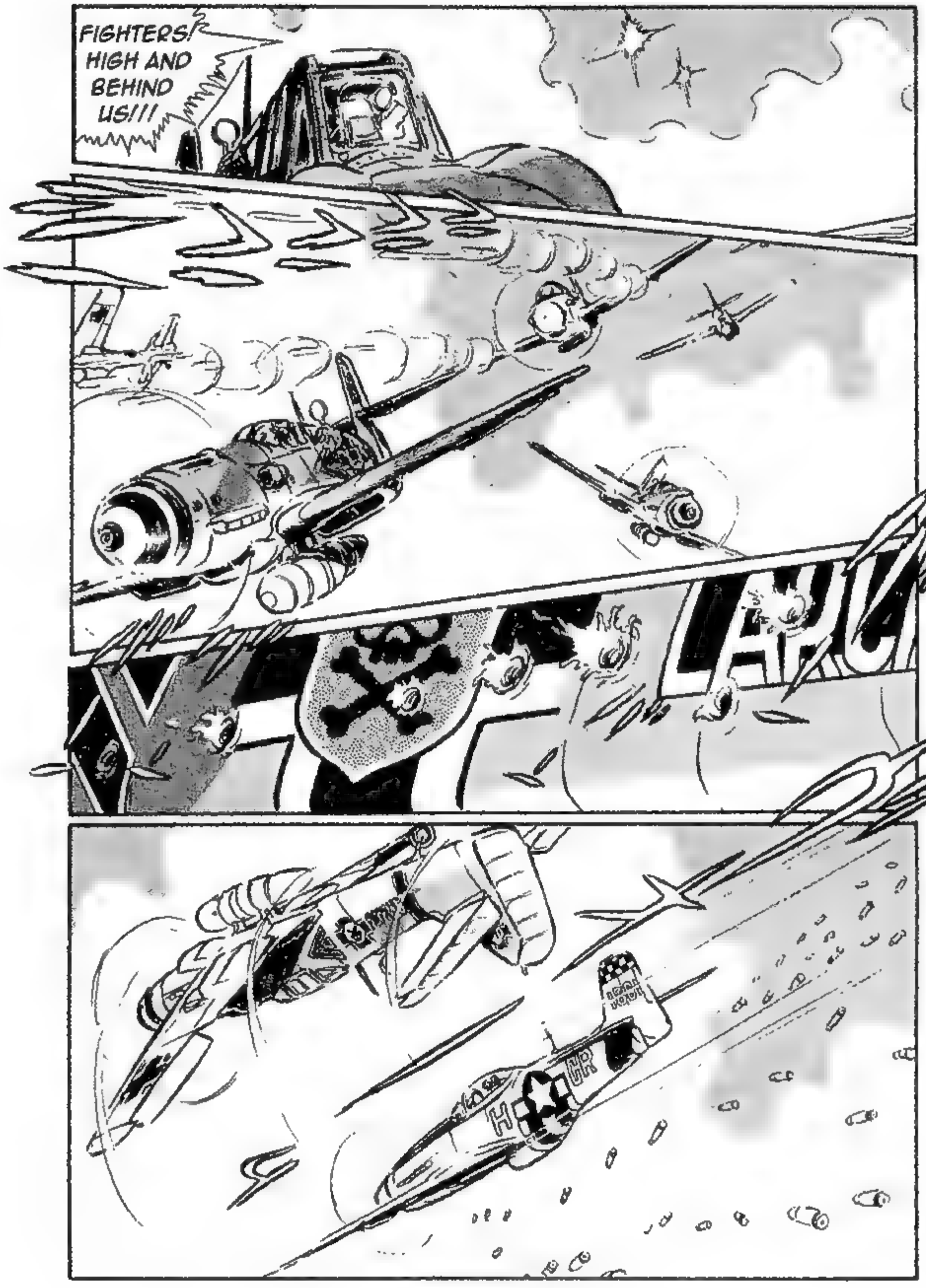
GOT IT!

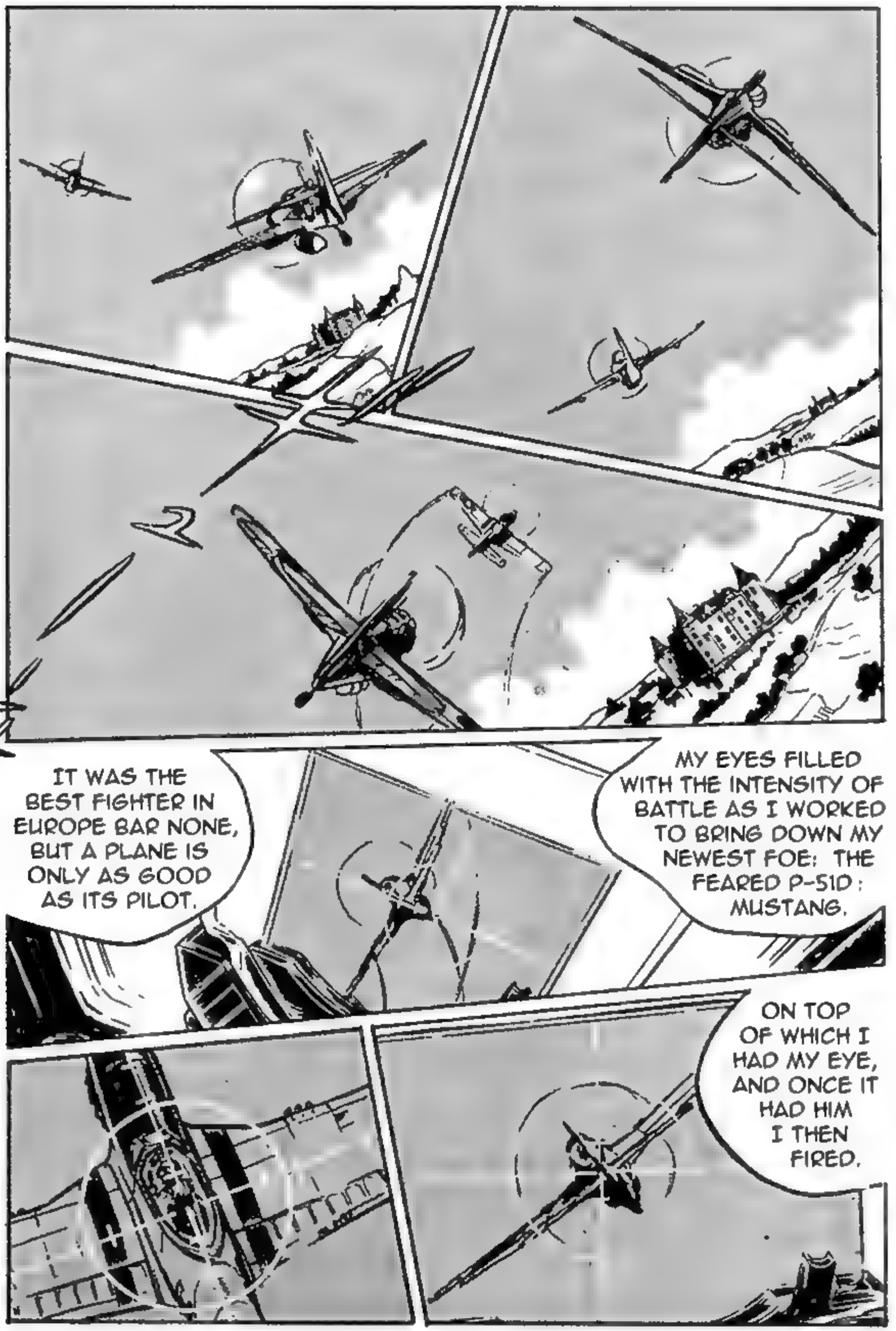
THERE'S NO ARMOR BACK THERE, SO DON'T BLAME ME IF YOU GET SHOT.

COVER OUR RETREATING SUPPLY CONVOY!

WHERE TO, SIR?

WE'VE GOT TO MAKE SURE THEY MAKE IT SAFELY OR WE WON'T HAVE ANOTHER PLACE TO LAND!


FIGHTERS! HIGH AND BEHIND US!!!
LAPUTA


IT WAS THE BEST FIGHTER IN EUROPE BAR NONE, BUT A PLANE IS ONLY AS GOOD AS ITS PILOT.
MY EYES FILLED WITH THE INTENSITY OF BATTLE AS I WORKED TO BRING DOWN MY NEWEST FOE: THE FEARED P-51D: MUSTANG.
ON TOP OF WHICH I HAD MY EYE, AND ONCE IT HAD HIM I THEN FIRED.

... BUT THAT'S WAR.

MY GUNS TORE HIM AND HIS PLANE APART, FILLING THE SKY BEFORE ME WITH FLAMING FUEL, METAL SHARDS, STREAKS OF BLOOD, AND WHAT REMAINED OF THE PILOT'S BODY ...

HE TRIED TO BAIL BUT JUMPED STRAIGHT UP AND INTO MY LINE OF FIRE. HE NEVER HAD A CHANCE.

I'VE GOT A GOOD VIEW NOW THANKS TO THESE HOLES.

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, DAIBA?

HARLOCK! ON YOUR RIGHT!!

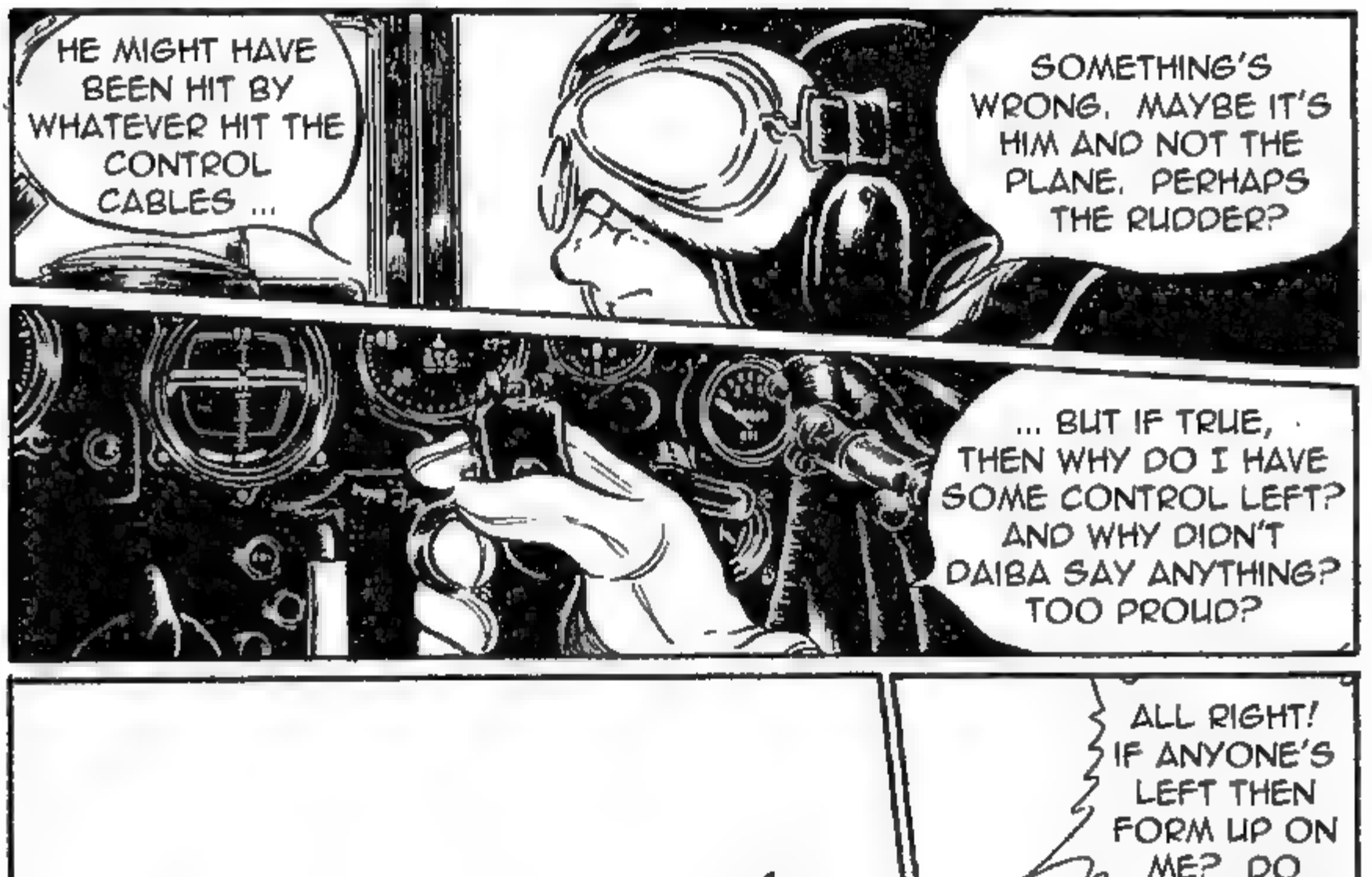
©ARCADIA

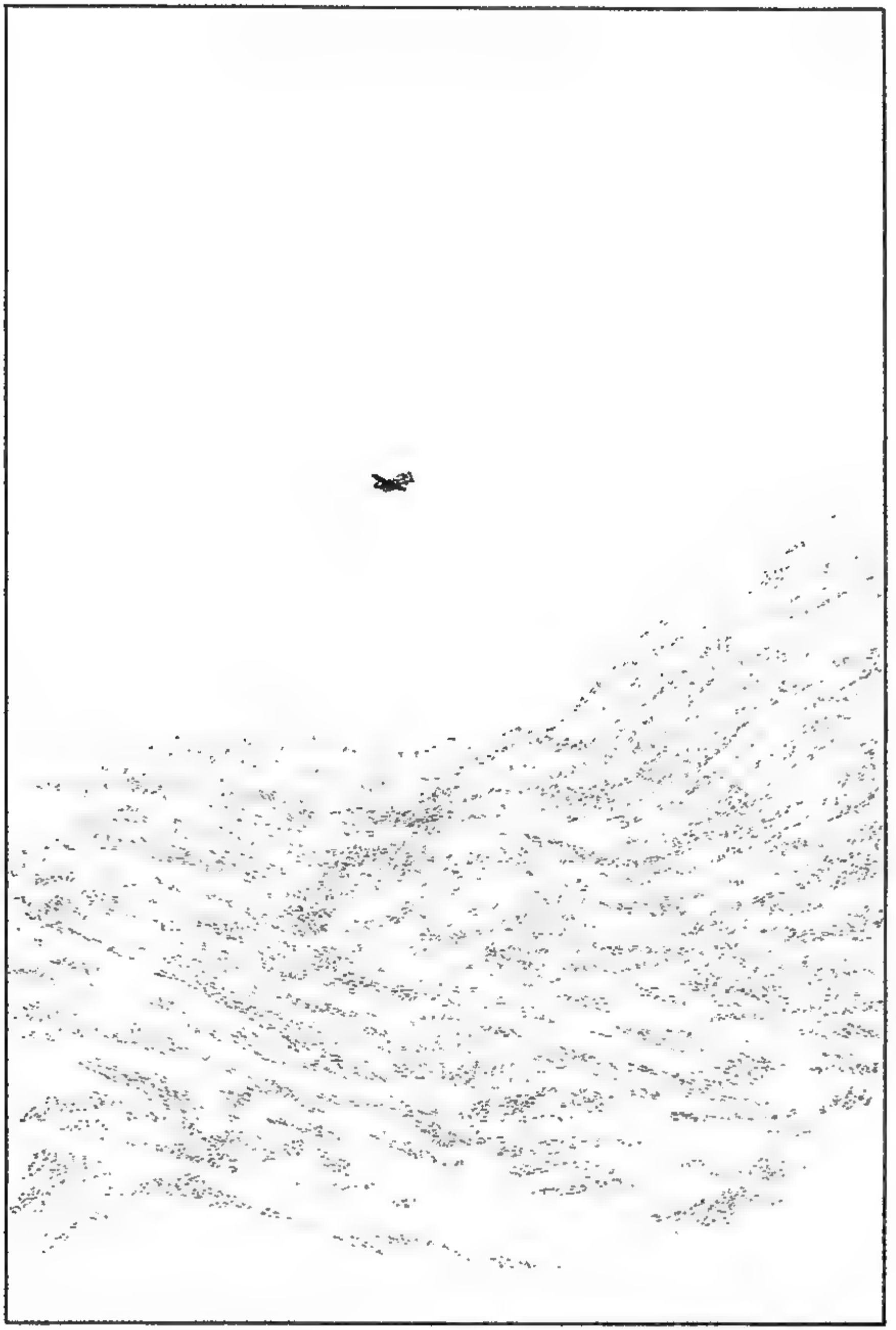
I'M ON HIM!

MY ELEVATORS ARE SLOW TO RESPOND AND FEEL MUSHY. STRANGE ....

EVERY ... THING'S ... FINE ... HARLOCK ... KEEP ... FLYING ....

DAIBA! DO YOU SEE ANYTHING WRONG BACK THERE?!


HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN HIT BY WHATEVER HIT THE CONTROL CABLES ...
SOMETHING'S WRONG. MAYBE IT'S HIM AND NOT THE PLANE. PERHAPS THE RUDDER?
... BUT IF TRUE, THEN WHY DO I HAVE SOME CONTROL LEFT? AND WHY DIDN'T DAIBA SAY ANYTHING? TOO PROUD?
ALL RIGHT! IF ANYONE'S LEFT THEN FORM UP ON ME? DO YOU HEAR? ANYONE?!



HMMM ... I MUST BE THE ONLY ONE.

I'VE ALSO GOT HOLES IN BOTH WING TANKS. NOT GOOD, HARLOCK.

HOW 'BOUT IT, REVI? WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? YOU DECIDE.

IT SHOWED ME WHAT I NEEDED TO SEE.

I LOOKED WITH BOTH OF MY STILL LIVING EYES BACK THEN AT MY TRUE EYE, MY REVI C/12D, WHICH HAD NEVER LET ME DOWN THROUGHOUT THE WAR. I KNEW IT COULD ANSWER THAT QUESTION.

AHH, YES. SWITZERLAND. THE ONLY POSSIBLE ANSWER. THANK YOU, OLD FRIEND. NOW ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS GET THERE.

WHY, I DON'T KNOW. FATE, PERHAPS?

I DIDN'T SEE A SINGLE ALLIED PLANE ON THE WAY.

I RAN ON MY AUXILIARY TANK UNTIL IT WAS DRY AND THEN DROPPED IT. ALL I HAD LEFT AFTER THAT WAS THE FUEL IN MY WING TANKS AND THE FUSELAGE.

MY WING TANKS WERE LEAKING. I CALCULATED I WOULD RUN OUT OF FUEL ABOUT THE TIME I REACHED THE SWISS BORDER.

NORMALY I COULD HAVE MADE IT BUT I HAD BATTLE DAMAGE.

YOU'RE A GERMAN PLANE, EVEN IF YOU'RE AN OLD ONE REBUILT WITH SPARE PARTS!

YOU CAN MAKE IT!

I FLEW THAT OLD WARHORSE AS SLOW AS I DARED BUT AT A SLIGHT CLIMB. I WOULD NEED THAT ALTITUDE LATER.

EVEN THE WORLD'S BEST AIRCRAFT ENGINES WILL FALL SILENT ONCE THEY RUN OUT OF FUEL.

I FINALLY RAN DRY JUST AS I WAS CLOSING ON THE SWISS BORDER. FORTUNATELY I WAS HIGH ENOUGH TO GLIDE THE REST OF THE WAY.

THAT'S ... GOOD! ... I ... BET ... YOU'D ... LIKE ... TO GO ... HOME ... TOO ....

WE'RE GOING TO SWITZER-LAND, DAIBA! AFTER THAT YOU CAN GO HOME!

YES ... ARCADIA. THE BARONIAL FIEF OF THE HARLOCKS IN HEILGENSTAADT. WE NAMED IT AFTER THE LAND OF GREEK LEGEND, GIVEN THE BEAUTY OF ITS MOUNTAINS AND RICH FORESTS.

ALL HARLOCKS RETURN THERE IN THE END. SOME HAVE TO BE BROUGHT BACK THERE TO REST, AS DID MY FATHER.

FIVE HUNDRED METERS ...

TWO HUNDRED ...

ONE HUNDRED ...

TEN METERS!

DAMN!!

DAIBA! WE'RE HERE!! THE SWISS BORDER IS ACROSS THAT RIVER!!!

I'LL BET YOU'RE READY TO GET--

DAIBA!!

OH MY GOD, DAIBA! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO YOURSELF?!!

OH, NO ...

... NO TIME TO ... SPLICE ... YOU ... WERE STILL FIGHTING ... I GUESS ... MY LASHUP ... WORKED ... EH?

I THOUGHT THE CONTROL CABLES HAD BEEN DAMAGED! BUT YOU ... YOU ...

IT'S ... OKAY ... I STILL HAVE ... SOME FEELING ... IN MY LEFT HAND ... ALTHOUGH BOTH FEET ... THEY'RE STILL NUMB ... DON'T THINK ... I CAN WALK ....

I'M SO SORRY DAIBA! HAD I BUT KNOWN! HAD I THE LEAST IDEA--!

THE REVI ... YOU GAVE ME ... IT'S BROKEN ... WHILE I WAS ... FIXING YOUR PLANE ....
HARLOCK ... PEOPLE ARE COMING ... MAQUIS* ...
HANG ON! I'LL BE RIGHT WITH YOU!
HERE'S MY EYE TO REPLACE THE OTHER. I WON'T NEED IT ANYMORE.
BUT ... BUT HAR-LOCK ....
HERE YOU GO, DAIBA. THIS BANK OF THE RIVER IS IN SWITZERLAND. YOU'RE SAFE HERE.
YES. THEY DARE THE SACRED SOIL OF GERMANY NOW THAT WE CAN'T DEFEND IT.

(*) *MAQUIS* – FRENCH RESISTANCE FIGHTERS. A NUMBER OF FRENCH PARTISAN GROUPS OPERATED IN SOUTHERN GERMAN AS FAR NORTH OF THE BORDER AS THEY DARED DURING THE WAR.

MY GIFT TO YOU. GOOD LUCK, DAIBA.

MAY MY EYE, MY REVI C/12D, HELP YOU AND JAPAN AS MUCH AS IT HELPED ME AND GERMANY.

I'M A HARLOCK, AND I'M NOT GOING TO SHY AWAY FROM WHAT MY COUNTRY HAS DONE DURING THIS WAR.

WHY ARE YOU GOING BACK?!?

GET WELL, FIND A WIFE, HAVE KIDS. ONCE YOU'RE ABLE THEN COME BACK AND VISIT ME IN ARCADIA. THE GATE WILL ALWAYS BE OPEN FOR YOU.

GO HOME, DAIBA.

... AND IF I CAN ONCE I'M BETTER ... I'LL TAKE YOU UP ON THAT!

I'LL NEVER FORGET YOU, HARLOCK!

I HOPE YOU ENJOYED THE LOOK AT SWITZERLAND, BECAUSE IT'S GOING TO BE THE LAST THING YOU EVER SEE! HOLD HIM STILL!!

NO, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DIE. THAT'S TOO EASY.

HALT RIGHT THERE, NAZI PIG! YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED ON THE OTHER BANK!

ACTUALLY MY LAST SIGHT WAS OF THE ANCHOR SCREWS AND BUTTPLATE OF THAT OLD FRENCH ARMY RIFLE BEFORE IT HIT ME.

YOU KNOW, MY FATHER USE TO USE YOU AS AN EXAMPLE TO ME WHEN I WAS LITTLE. "BE A REAL MAN, LIKE CAPTAIN HARLOCK! BE IRON WILLED! NEVER GIVE UP ON YOUR DREAMS!"

SNIF!

WELL, THAT'S MY STORY.

I'VE BEEN BLIND EVER SINCE.

TELL ME, YOUNG MAN. DID DAIBA EVER GET TO LIVE HIS DREAM?

A LOT OF THE CAMERA LENSES AND OTHER GLASS FITTINGS THAT WE JAPANESE PUT IN OUR SPACE PROBES WERE DESIGNED BY HIM. YES SIR, HE DID.

YES SIR. AFTER THE WAR HE CONTINUED WORKING WITH NIKON.

SNIFFLE

LISTEN TO ME. I HAVEN'T LAUGHED IN YEARS, BUT NOW I HAVE ... THANKS TO DAIBA.

ME, AN EXAMPLE. HA-HA-HA HA-HAH ....

THANK YOU, SUSUMU. THANK YOU FOR COMING FOR YOUR FATHER.

... AND YOURS BACK THEN, BUT I'M STILL WORKING HARD TO ACHIEVE THEM — AND BELIEVE ME I WILL! SOMEDAY ....

OH, HE MADE SURE OF THAT. MY DREAMS AREN'T THE SAME AS HIS ...

DO YOU WORK AS HARD AS YOUR FATHER, SUSUMU?

UH, YES SIR.

BEFORE YOU GO, YOUNG MAN ... MAY I TOUCH YOUR FACE ONE MORE TIME?

HE'S IN YOUR IMAGE, DAIBA ...

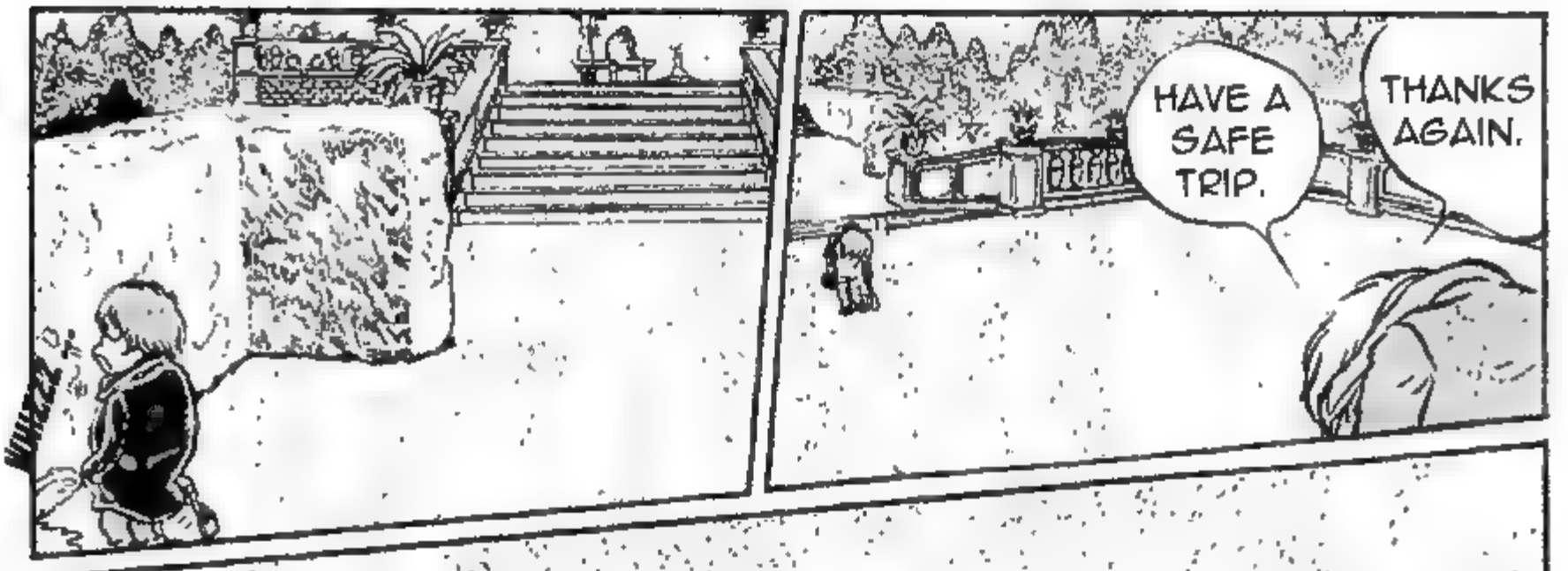
THAT'S OUR LEGACY TO OUR CHILDREN, DAIBA. THROUGH THEM OUR BLOOD WILL NEVER DIE.

... JUST LIKE MINE. SHE'S A GIRL AND LIKE YOURS HER DREAMS ARE HERS, BUT SHE'S JUST AS HEADSTRONG AND JUST AS DETERMINED.

*AND ONCE I AM, I WANT TO KNOW HOW YOU EVER MANAGED TO USE MY REVI C/12D IN ONE OF THOSE SPACESHIPS OF YOURS!**

I'LL BE WITH YOU SOON, OLD FRIEND!

(*) THIS LINE INSPIRED THE USE OF HARLOCK'S WORLD WAR II ERA REVI C/12D GUNSIGHT AS A BACKUP MANUAL SIGHT FOR THE SPACE PIRATE GALLEON ARCADIA OVER A THOUSAND YEARS LATER IN THE *MY YOUTH IN ARCADIA* FEATURE FILM.



I HAVE NO REGRETS ABOUT MY LIFE AND HOW I LIVED IT. IF THAT WERE THE CASE THEN I PROBABLY SHOULDN'T HAVE LIVED IT AT ALL. HAD I BEEN BORN A WOMAN THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT.

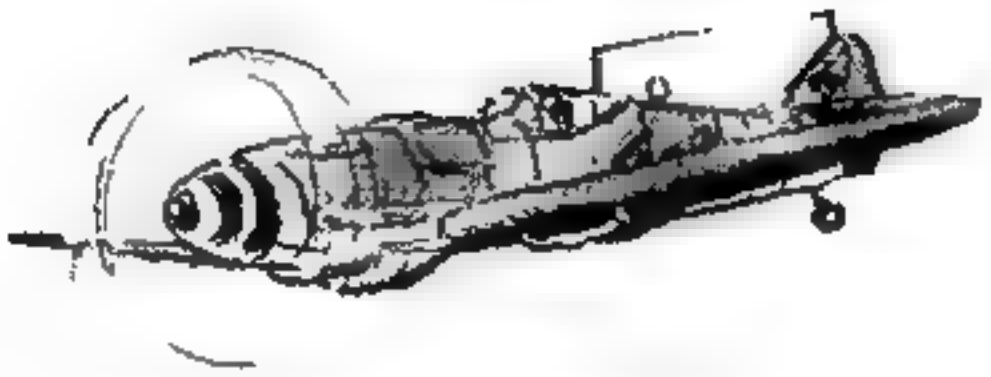
MY NAME IS PHANTOM F. HARLOCK II.
I AWAIT MY DEATH AT MY ESTATE OF ARCADIA IN THE TOWN OF HEILGENSTAADT IN OBERFRANKEN.
I HAVE MY EYE ONCE AGAIN, AND I AM GLAD THAT IT WILL BE THERE FOR MY FINAL JOURNEY.
SOON I WILL BE WITH DAIBA AGAIN.

THE RAIN CONTINUES TO SOAK MY BODY. IT REMINDS ME OF MY YOUTH IN ARCADIA IN THE ARCADIA OF MY YOUTH. NO, I DON'T ASK YOU TO UNDERSTAND.

WHERE WILL I FIND YOU, DAIBA?
WILL THAT NEW LIFE BE AS FUFILLING AS THIS?

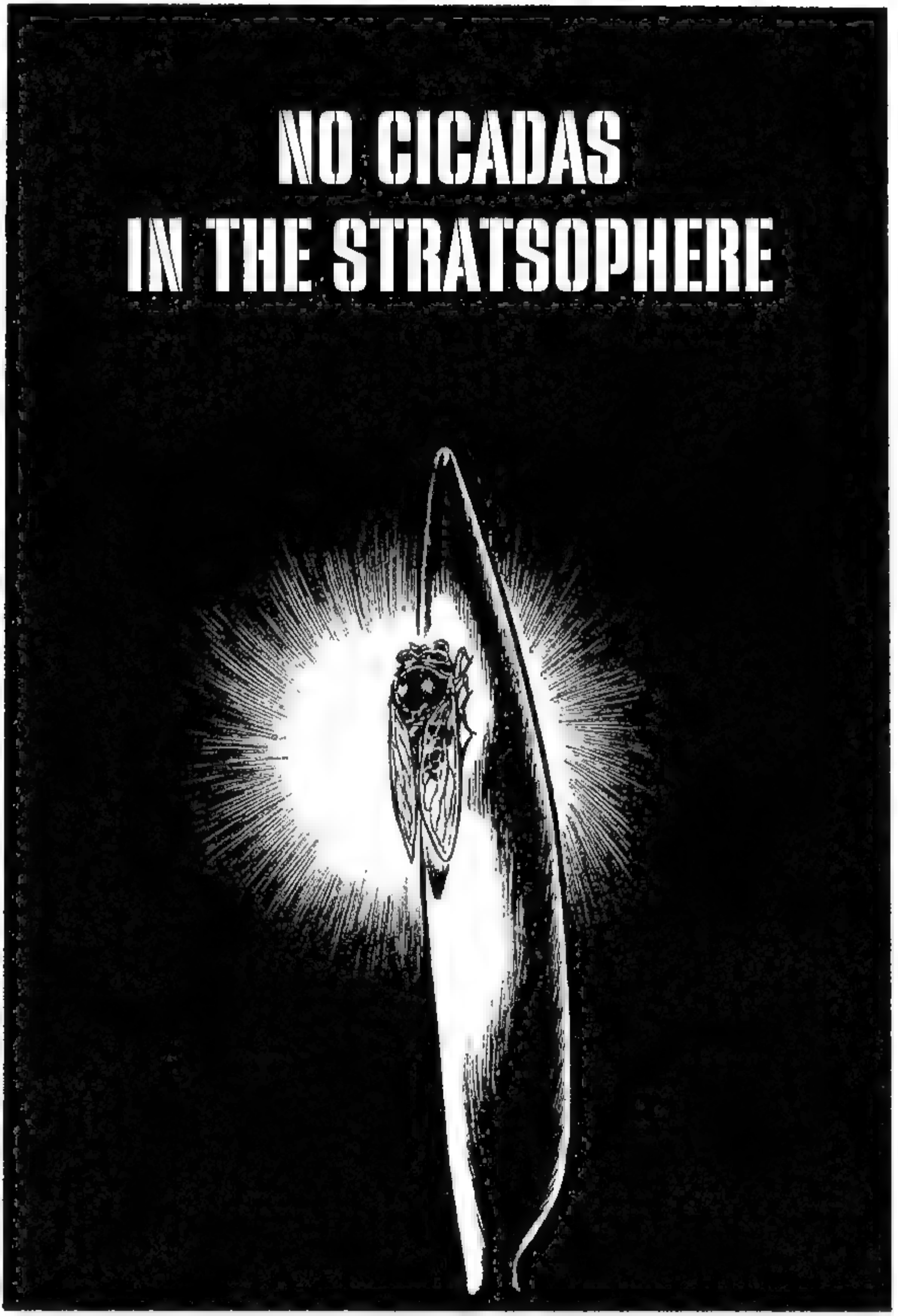
DAS ENDE

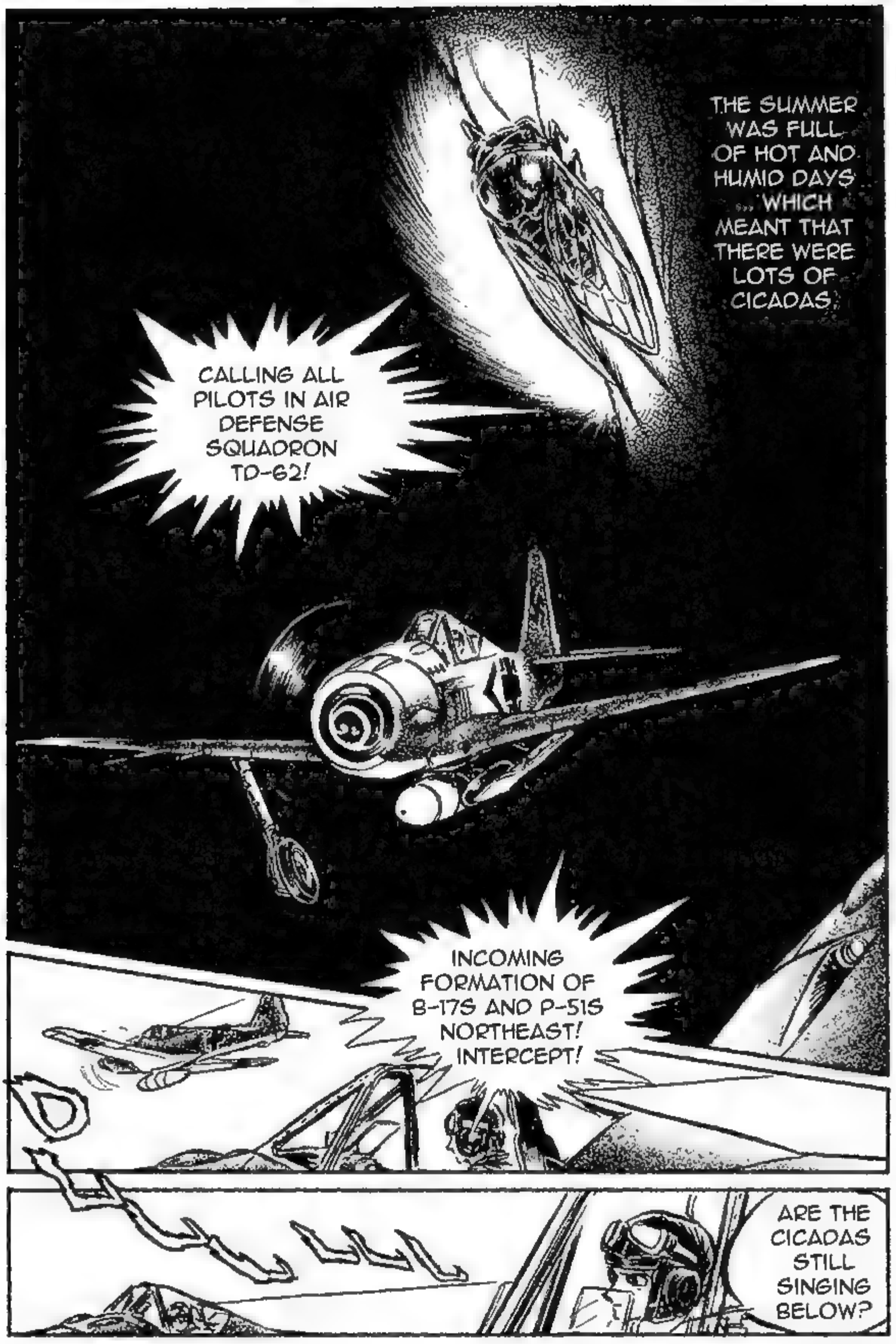
(Published in Big Comic Original, May 5, 1976 issue)



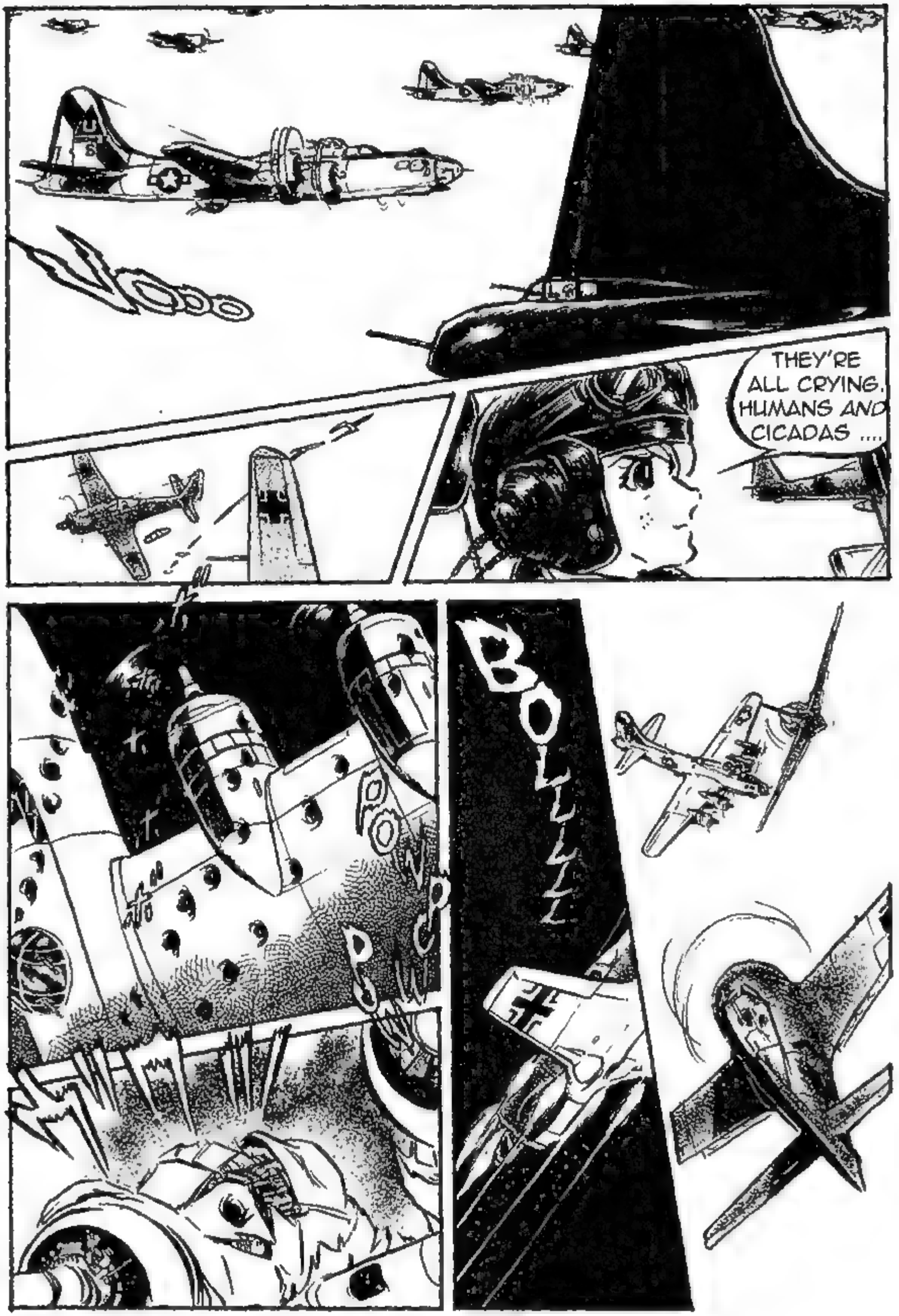
LEIJI
MATSUMOTO
PRESENTS

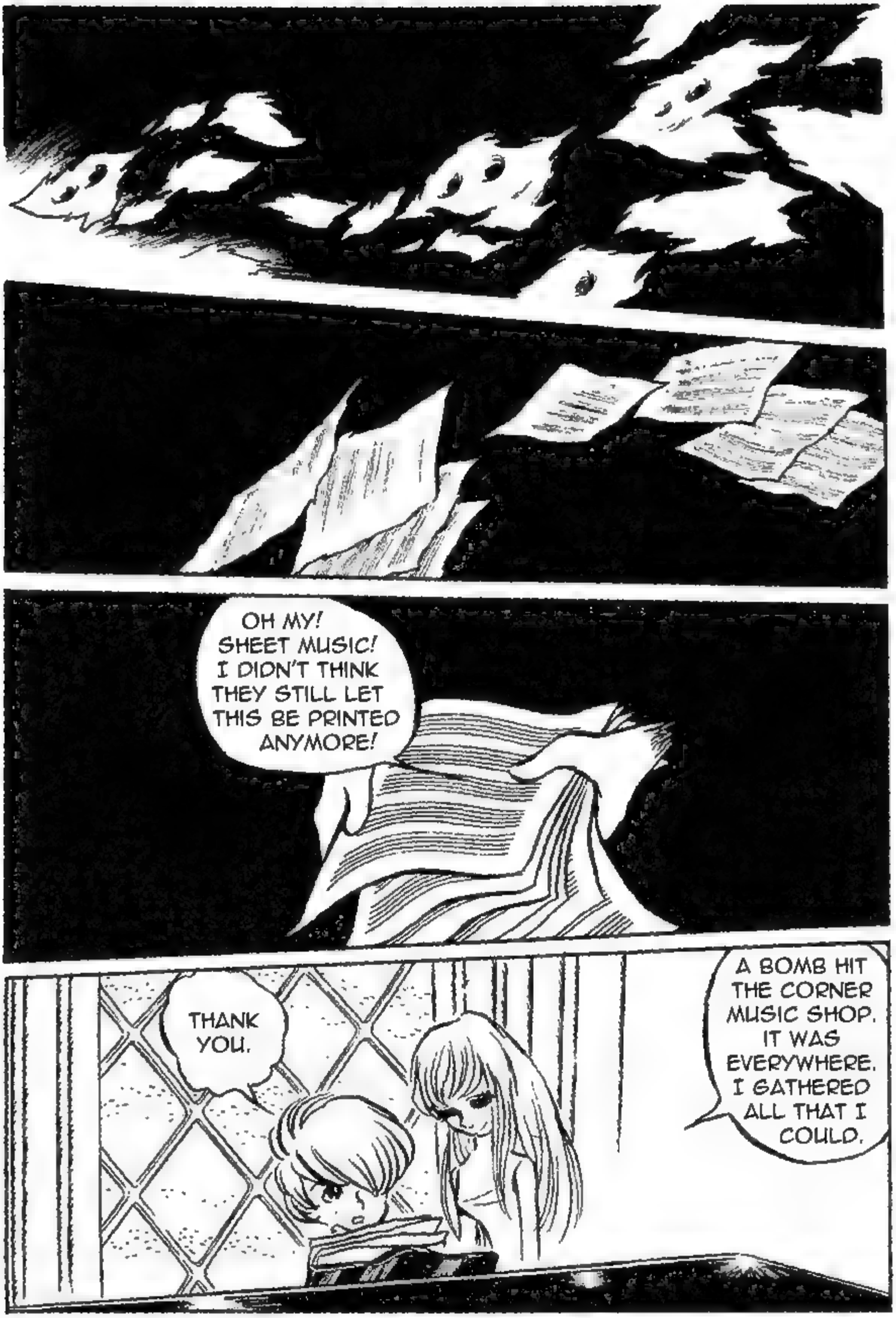
THE COCKPIT


NO CICADAS
IN THE STRATSOPHERE


THE SUMMER WAS FULL OF HOT AND HUMID DAYS ... WHICH MEANT THAT THERE WERE LOTS OF CICADAS.
CALLING ALL PILOTS IN AIR DEFENSE SQUADRON TD-62!
INCOMING FORMATION OF B-17S AND P-51S NORTHEAST! INTERCEPT!
ARE THE CICADAS STILL SINGING BELOW?

NO CICADAS IN THE STRATOSPHERE




OH MY! SHEET MUSIC! I DIDN'T THINK THEY STILL LET THIS BE PRINTED ANYMORE!
A BOMB HIT THE CORNER MUSIC SHOP. IT WAS EVERYWHERE. I GATHERED ALL THAT I COULD.
THANK YOU.

NO CICADAS IN THE STRATOSPHERE

THERE WAS NO ONE LEFT TO PAY. THE OWNER DIED IN THE BOMBING.
DID YOU PAY FOR IT?
THERE WERE RECORDS TOO.
STRAUSS ... "THUS SPAKE ZARATHUSTRA" .....
POETRY FOR THE MIND ....
HAVING SHOPS AND COLLECTIONS FULL OF THEIR WORKS GREAT AND SMALL BLOWN TO BITS.
THE PAST MASTERS NEVER SUFFERED THAT.

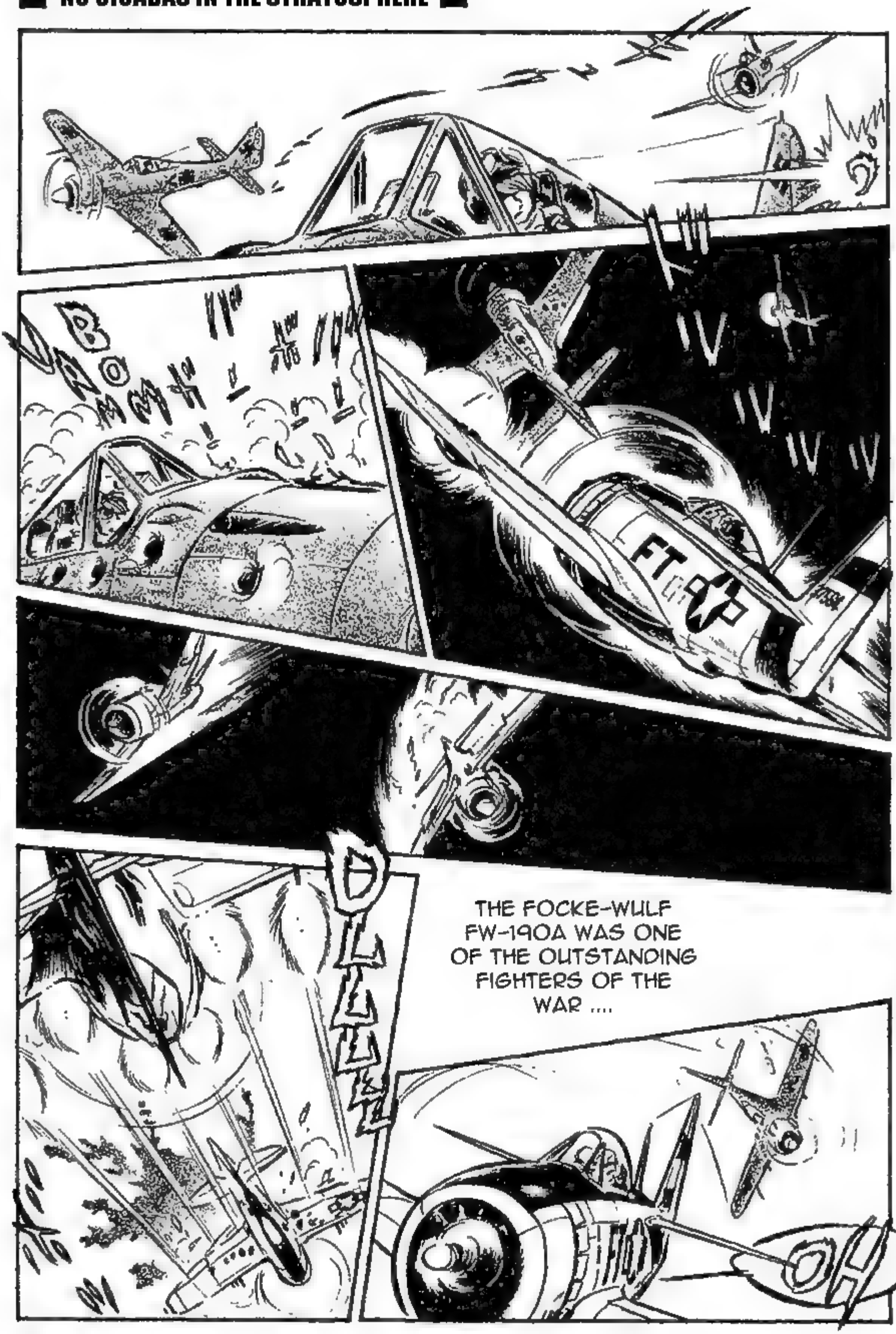
OH LOOK! A NEW LIFE BEING BORN FROM THE OLD FORM!

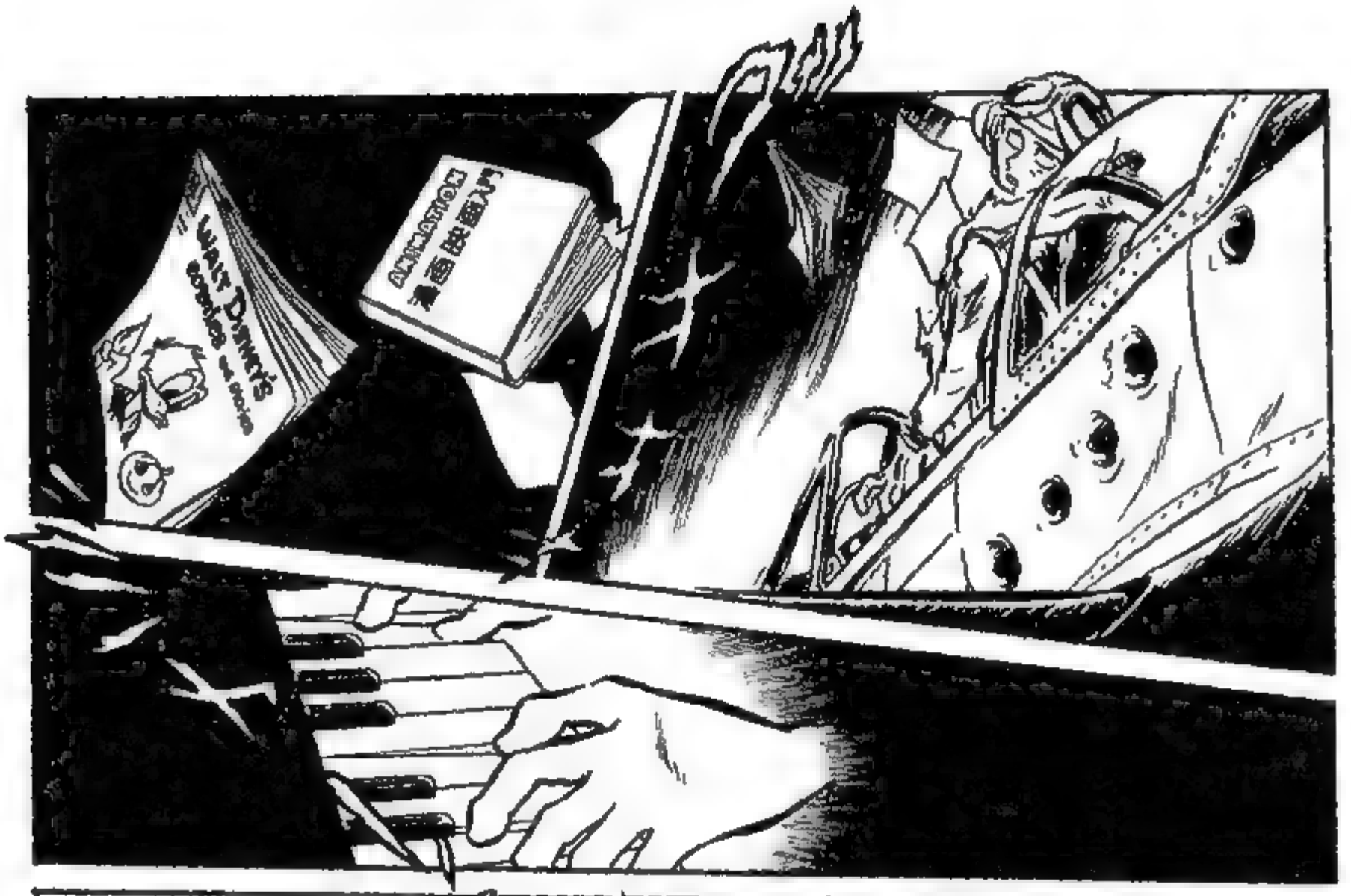
AS DOES THE NEW LIFE I BEAR FOR YOU.

LOOK AT THOSE STARS! WHAT A NIGHT! I WISH THEY COULD SHINE LIKE THIS EVERY NIGHT!

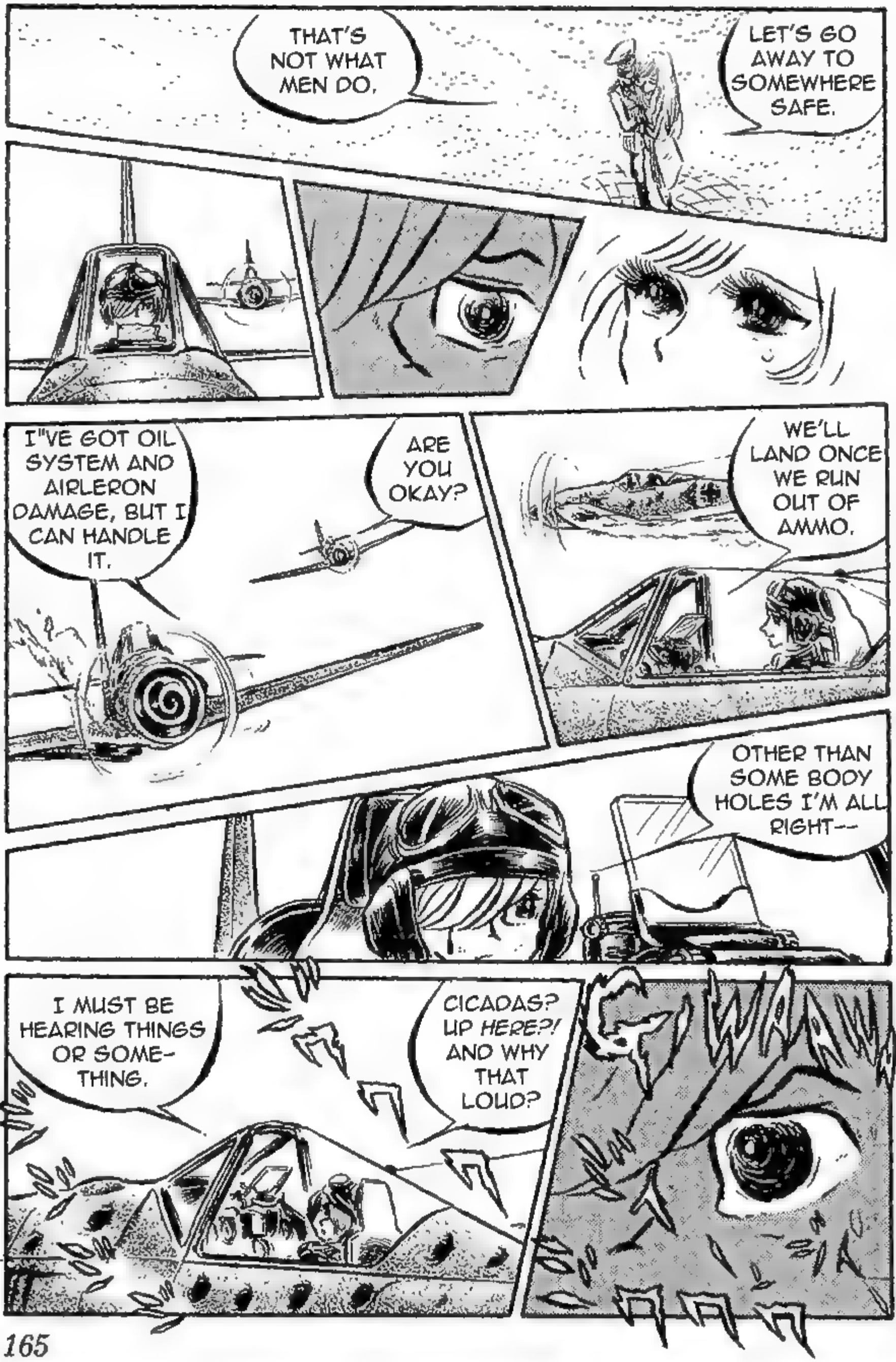
WATCH OUT! ENEMY ON YOUR LEFT!! DIVE!!!

NO CICADAS IN THE STRATOSPHERE




Walt Disney's Comics
Donald Duck

I WISH I COULD SING THAT GOOD.
THOSE CICADAS SURE CAN SING!
I NEVER FOUND THE TIME TO LEARN.
MY LEAVE IS ALMOST DONE, AND THIS MAY BE THE LAST SONG I EVER WRITE.
GIWA
WKWA


THAT'S NOT WHAT MEN DO.
LET'S GO AWAY TO SOMEWHERE SAFE.
I"VE GOT OIL SYSTEM AND AIRLERON DAMAGE, BUT I CAN HANDLE IT.
ARE YOU OKAY?
WE'LL LAND ONCE WE RUN OUT OF AMMO.
OTHER THAN SOME BODY HOLES I'M ALL RIGHT--
I MUST BE HEARING THINGS OR SOME-THING.
CICADAS? UP *HERE*?! AND WHY THAT LOUD?

NO ... IT'S JUST MY EARS RINGING.

WHEN YOU LAND IN SWITZERLAND I'LL ALREADY BE THERE.

THEN IT'S AGREED, LOVE.

CICADAS SING WITH ALL OF THEIR MIGHT UNTIL THEY DIE. I WONDER ...

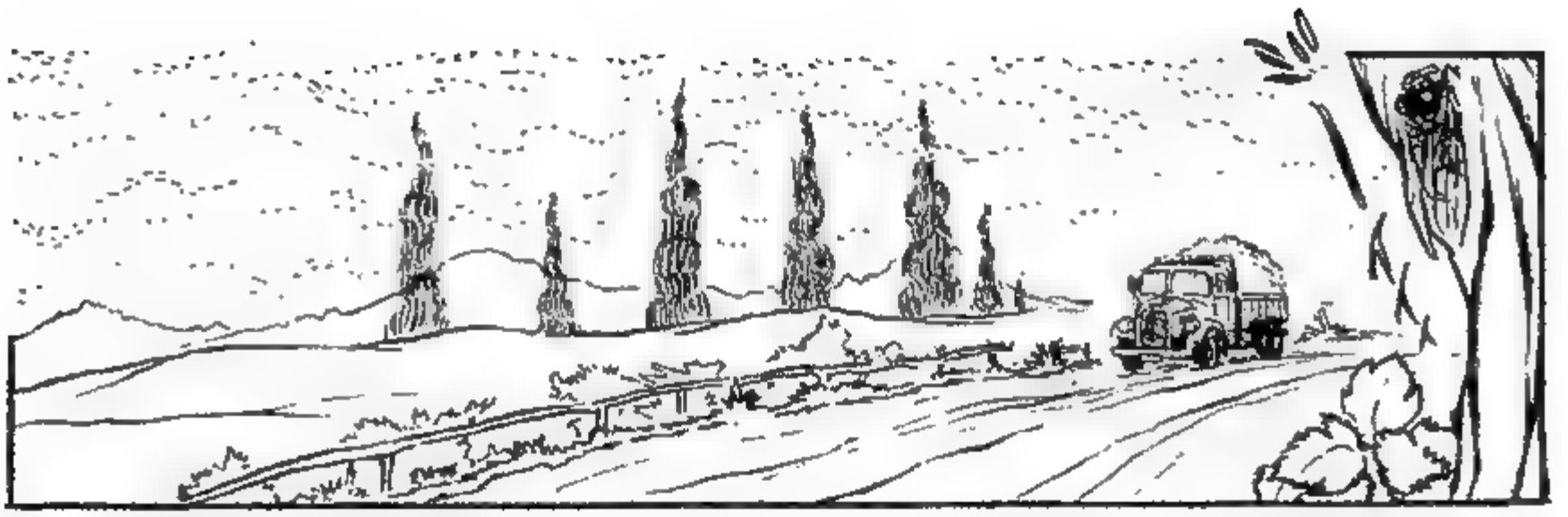
BUT WHAT IF IT ISN'T? WHAT IF ... WHAT IF SHE'S DEAD?

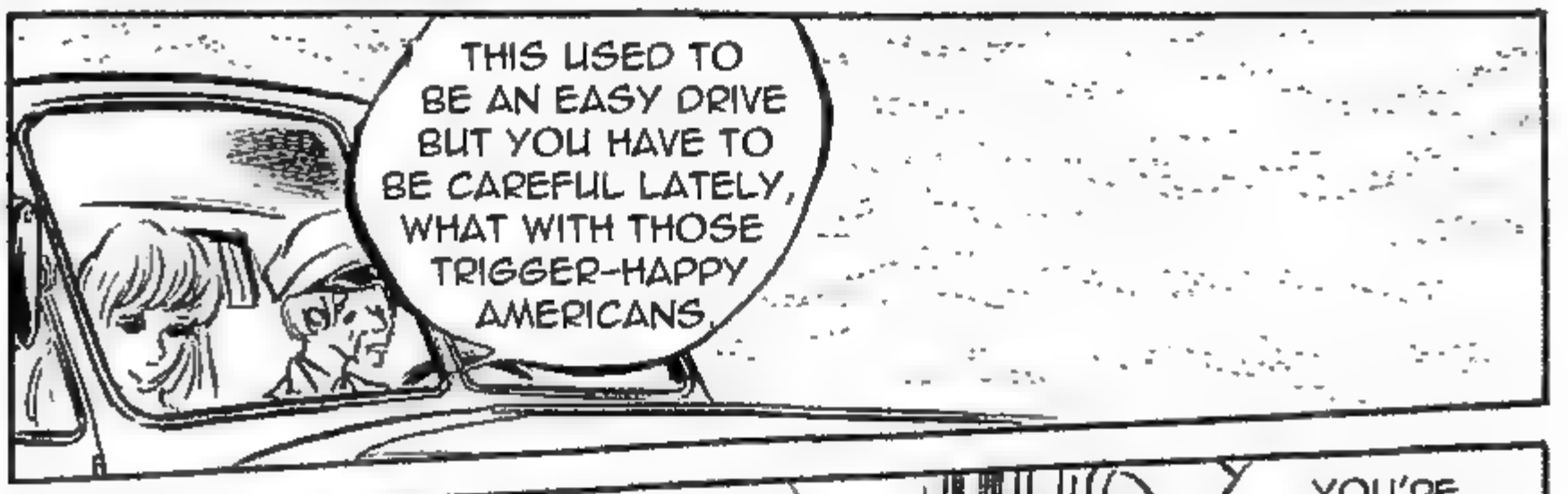
DZZZ

AAHH!!

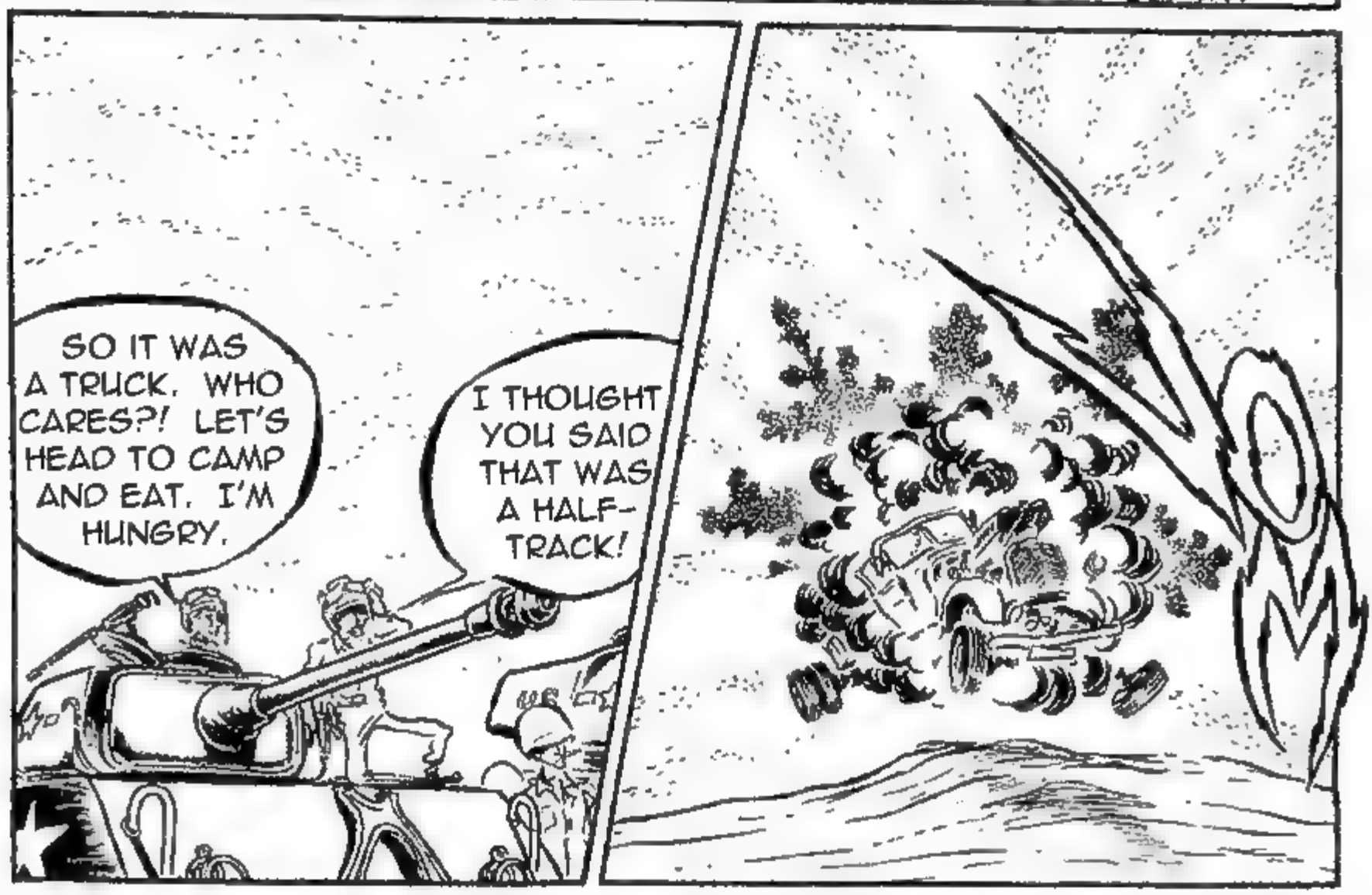
NO CICADAS IN THE STRATOSPHERE

SHIT! I'M THE ONLY ONE LEFT!! I'VE GOT TO FLY OR DIE!!!
THAT'S THE LAST OF THEM.
WHERE IS IT COMING FROM, AND WHY AM I HEARING IT UP HERE?!?
THERE'S THAT SOUND AGAIN! THE CICADAS SINGING!!




THIS USED TO BE AN EASY DRIVE BUT YOU HAVE TO BE CAREFUL LATELY, WHAT WITH THOSE TRIGGER-HAPPY AMERICANS.

IT IS. MY HUSBAND'S SONG.
YOU'RE HOLDING THAT LIKE IT'S THE SOMETHING VALUABLE.


SO IT WAS A TRUCK. WHO CARES?! LET'S HEAD TO CAMP AND EAT. I'M HUNGRY.
I THOUGHT YOU SAID THAT WAS A HALF-TRACK!

TH-TH ... THERE IT IS ... BUT ... BUT HOW? UNLESS ... OH, NO ....
IT'S MY HUSBAND'S SONG

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE FULL OF POSSIBILITIES. THEY NEED TO BE GIVEN THE TIME FOR THOSE TO BECOME REALITY.

OTHERWISE THEY ARE LIKE CICADAS, SINGING STRONG AND BEAUTIFUL BUT SADLY SO SHORT.

ON A DAY CLOSE TO THE END OF THE WAR, TWO YOUNG PEOPLE DIED MILES APART IN GERMANY.

I'M COMING, LOVE ....

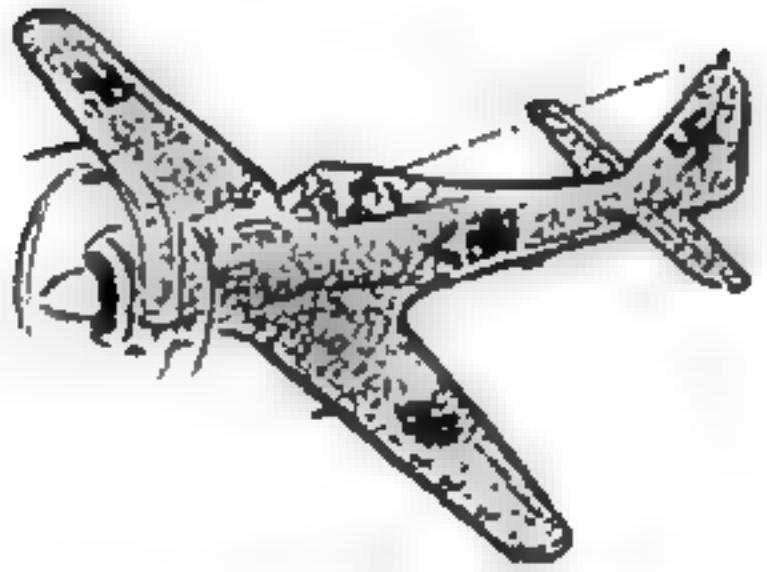
AAAHHH ....

ONE WAS A PILOT, THE OTHER HIS WIFE. NONE KNOW THEIR NAMES TODAY; WHATEVER THEY MIGHT HAVE DONE TOGETHER WAS CUT SHORT BY THE WAR.

ENDE

NO CICADAS IN THE STRATOSPHERE

<Published in COM, October 1969 issue>



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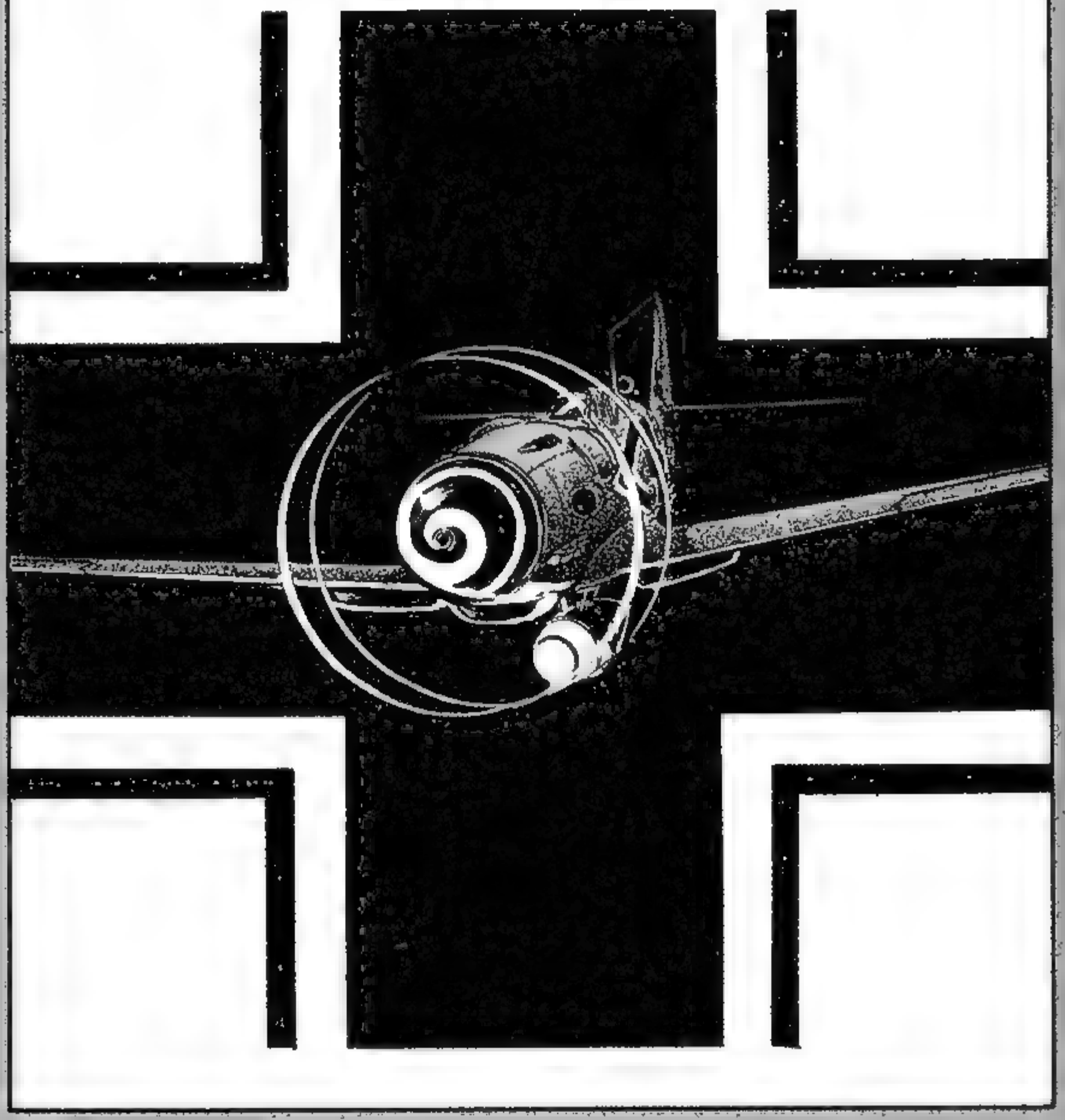
THE COCKPIT

THE IRON CROSS OF AFRICA



I TOO RISKED MY LIFE IN MY YOUTH SUPPORTING THE AFRIKA KORPS AS A FIGHTER PILOT ABOVE THE DESERT SANDS AND UNDER ITS BLUE SKIES ...

ROMMEL, THE DESERT FOX ... MONTGOMERY, WHO FINALLY BEAT HIM AT EL ALAMEIN ... THE TWO-YEAR BATTLE OF THE DESERT ...

NORTH AFRICA, WORLD WAR II ....

JUST NAMING THAT PLACE AND TIME BRINGS UP SUCH LEGENDS OF THE WAR ...

OCTOBER 23, 1942 FOUND ME IN MY MESSERSCHMITT BF-109G AS PART OF THE BATTLE OF EL ALAMEIN.

MY NAME IS WALTER VON REINHARDT.

OH, I'M SORRY.

MY YOUTH ....

THIS IS WHEN GERMANY WAS AT ITS GREATEST, WHEN I THOUGHT OF NOTHING BUT TO KILL THE REICH'S ENEMIES.

JUST STATIC. MAYBE IT'S AFFECTING MY RADIO TOO.

I'M LOST IN THIS SAND-STORM! I DON'T KNOW MY POSITION!

TO ALL PLANES IN JG58!*

(*) "JG" – *JAGDGESCHWADER*, THE GERMAN TERM FOR AN AIRCRAFT SQUADRON. JAGDGESCHWADER 58 (JG58) IS FICTIONAL AND WAS INVENTED BY MATSUMOTO FOR THIS STORY.

EVEN WITH A FULL DROP TANK OF EXTRA FUEL IT COULD RUN RINGS AROUND A SPITFIRE.

THE BF-109G WAS AN AMAZING FIGHTER.

IF I RAN OUT IN THIS SANDSTORM I'D BE DEAD.

GOOD THING I'VE GOT A FULL LOAD OF FUEL.

DAMN SANDSTORM! MY RADIO IS STILL USELESS!*

I'LL BET THE BRITISH ARE HAVING IT JUST AS BAD.

IT'S LIKE EVERYTHING IS BEING SWALLOWED IN SAND.

HUH?

I CAN'T EVEN PICK UP OUR TANKS BELOW.

AT THAT MOMENT AND THROUGH A BREAK IN THE SAND I SAW HARD GROUND.

BEST TO WAIT OUT THE STORM THERE THAN FLY AND WASTE FUEL.

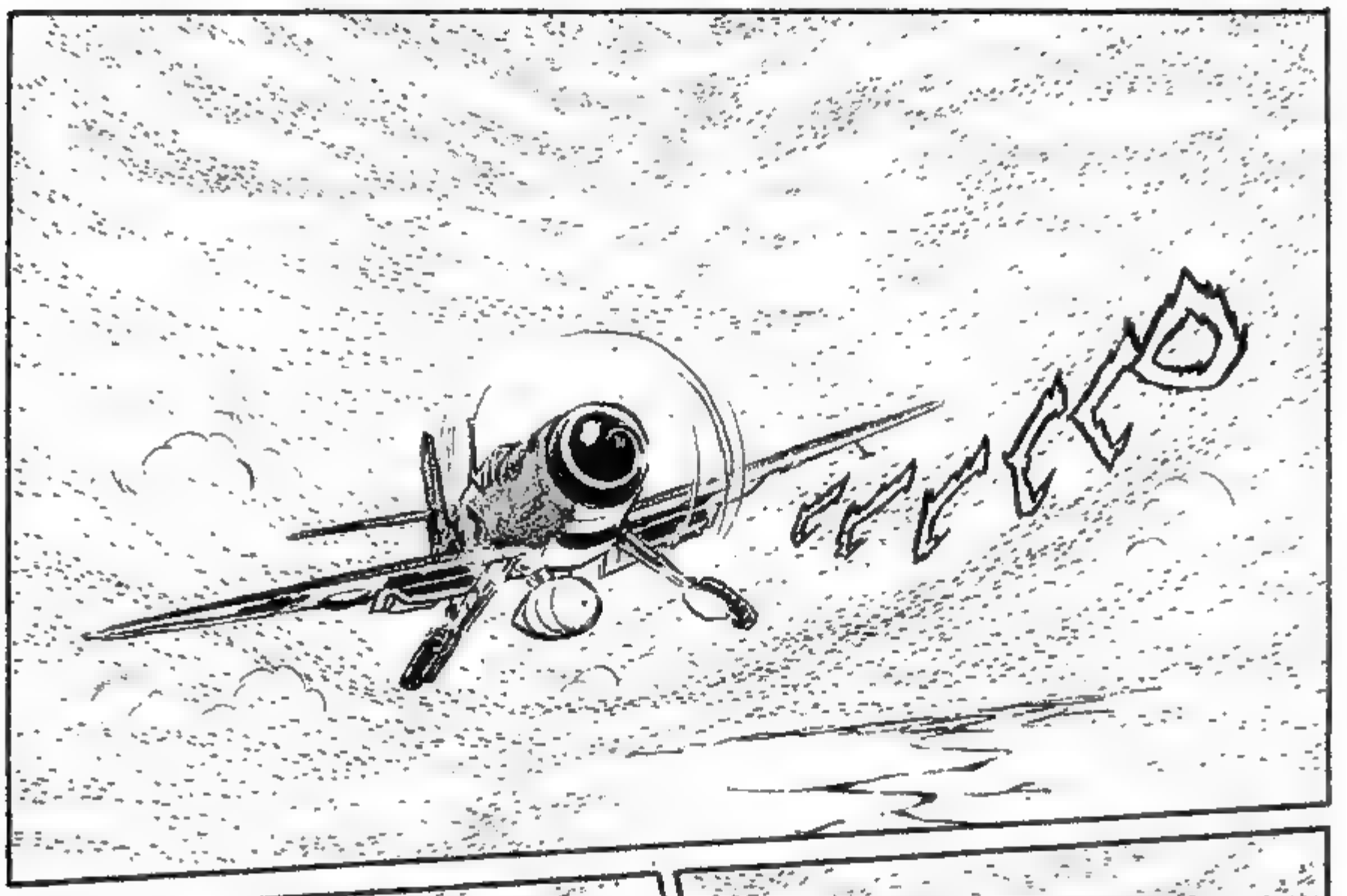
I'M GOING TO SET DOWN THERE WHILE I CAN.

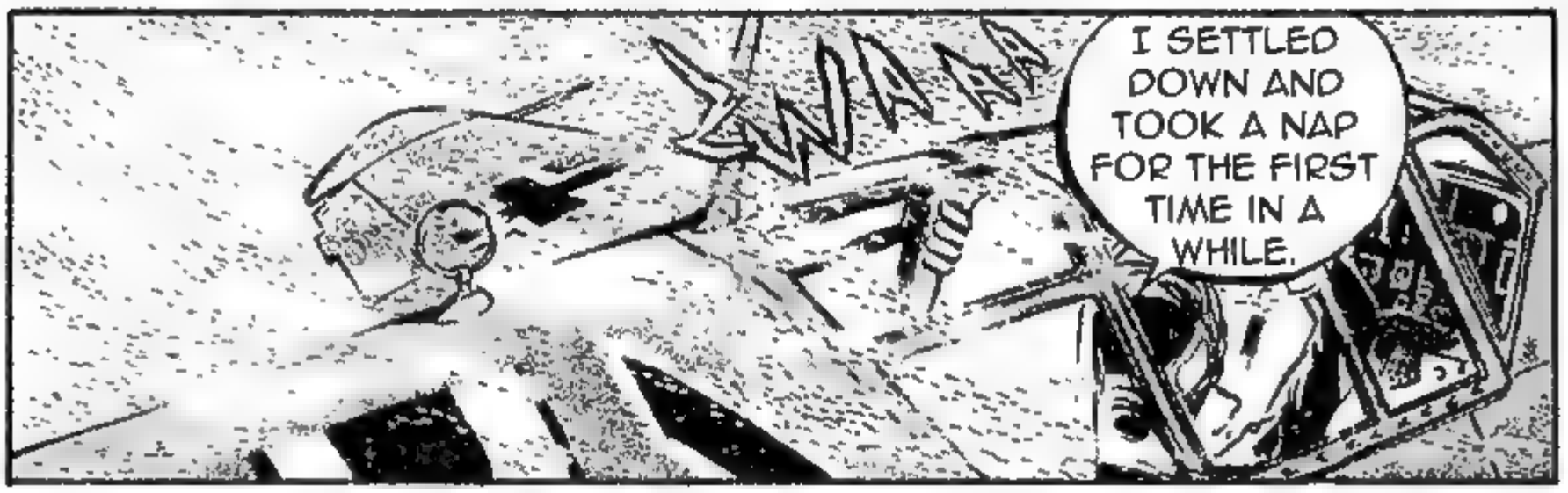
"ROCK DESERT" IS WHAT YOU GET WITH SAND REPEATEDLY IMPACTED DOWN BY HARD WIND.

IT CAN BE AS HARD AS CONCRETE OR ASPHALT ... LIKE A RUNWAY ....

NO, NOT GROUND, BUT "ROCK DESERT!"

(*) FIERCE SANDSTORMS ARE KNOWN FOR GENERATING SIGNIFICANT ELECTROSTATIC EFFECTS THAT CAN INTERFERE WITH RADAR AND RADIO COMMUNICATIONS.


BETTER THAN SOME I'VE HAD TO USE AT TIMES.
HMMM! ALMOST AS GOOD AS A PROPER RUNWAY.


I SETTLED DOWN AND TOOK A NAP FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A WHILE.

WE HAD BEEN FIGHTING FOR DAYS WITH ONLY SNATCHES OF SLEEP HERE AND THERE.
I SLEPT HARD, THE SLEEP OF THE VERY TIRED ....

"I'VE SLEPT TOO LONG," I THOUGHT.
I FINALLY WOKE TO THE CHILL AIR OF DESERT NIGHT:

THE CHILLY DESERT NIGHT AIR WOULD MAKE THE ENGINE DIFFICULT TO START. I DECIDED TO WAIT FOR DAWN, WHEN IT WOULD BE WARMER.

THE FAINT SOUND OF TWO PEOPLE TALKING AND ENJOYING EACH OTHER.

IT WAS THEN I HEARD IT.

NO DAMAGE, JUST SOME SAND TO CLEAN OFF.

HMM. THAT'S GOOD.

BUT OUT HERE?! IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE?! I HAD TO SEE FOR MYSELF.

OH MY ....

AHHH ... OOOHHH ... YES, YES ....

DEFINITELY NOT A MIRAGE, THAT'S FOR SURE.

AM I HALLUCI-NATING? NO. THEN IT'S FOR REAL.

THEY DO SAY THAT THINGS GET WEIRD BEFORE THE END.

OH! I SEE NOW ...

THEY MUST HAVE BEEN TRYING TO GET OUT OF THE SANDSTORM TOO.

THEY DON'T LET WOMEN FLY THEIR FIGHTERS, ONLY TRANSPORTS.

SPITFIRES. THAT MEANS BOTH MUST BE BRITISH. BUT I DON'T GET IT.

BEST NOT TO INTRUDE ON THEM.

THEY'RE SO CAUGHT UP IN THEIR PASSION.

ONE THING'S FOR SURE. IF THIS IS PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE IT'S ENTERTAINING.

LEUTNANT WALTER VON REINHARDT, AT YOUR SERVICE!

H-HULLO! WHEN'D YOU GET HERE?

KLIK!

LT. LANTREE, RAF.

AND MAY I ASK YOUR NAMES IN RETURN?

WELL, I, AH, UHM ...

BUT YOU WERE ALL WOMAN LAST NIGHT.

DON'T LET YOUR SPYING ON US DECEIVE YOU. I'M A FIGHTER TOO.

CATHERINE LENA, FREE FRENCH. SO YOU'RE THE FAMOUS GERMAN ACE.

BUT THE STORM GROUNDED ME LIKE YOU.

I'M SORRY. I TRIED NOT TO INTRUDE ...

TRUE. I COULD HAVE SHOT YOU BOTH LAST NIGHT.

FOR MY PART I THANK YOU. NICE TO SEE A GERMAN BEHAVING LIKE IN THE OLD DAYS.

AGREED. PLEASE?

OH, PUT THAT THING AWAY, MISS. IT'S A GENTLEMAN'S TRUCE.

I WAS TEACHING CATHERINE TO FLY WHEN THE STORM CAUGHT US, AND SHE ....

WE'VE GOT ONLY ONE GOOD PLANE LEFT.

MY "GUSTAV" COMES WITH SAND FILTERS. VERY HANDY, AS IN LAST NIGHT.

AH, THE NEW 109! I'VE ONLY EVER FOUGHT THE OLDER ONE.

AND I'VE NO INTENTION OF GIVING EITHER OF YOU MINE.

THAT MEANS THERE'S THREE OF US AND ONLY TWO PLANES.

I'M GAME IF YOU ARE, OLD BOY.

A DUEL IN THE SKIES, WITH THE PRIZE BEING ESCORTING THIS FAIR LADY OUT OF HERE.

THEN LET'S FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO LEAVE.

YOU'VE BUILT YOUR EMPIRE ON THE BACKS AND BLOOD OF THOSE YOU DEEM INFERIOR.

YOU BRITISH ARE ALL ALIKE, YOU KNOW? ALWAYS IMAGINING YOUSELVES SUPERIOR.

AFTER ALL, I'VE NO DOUBT AS TO WHO'S GOING TO WIN.

... WHILE I GO TAKE A NAP.

AGREED. YOU CLEAN YOUR PLANE AND GET IT READY ...

ENOUGH WITH THE POLITICS!

FRANCE IS JUST AS GUILTY. INDOCHINA,* NORTH AFRICA--

(*) INDOCHINA - MODERN DAY VIETNAM

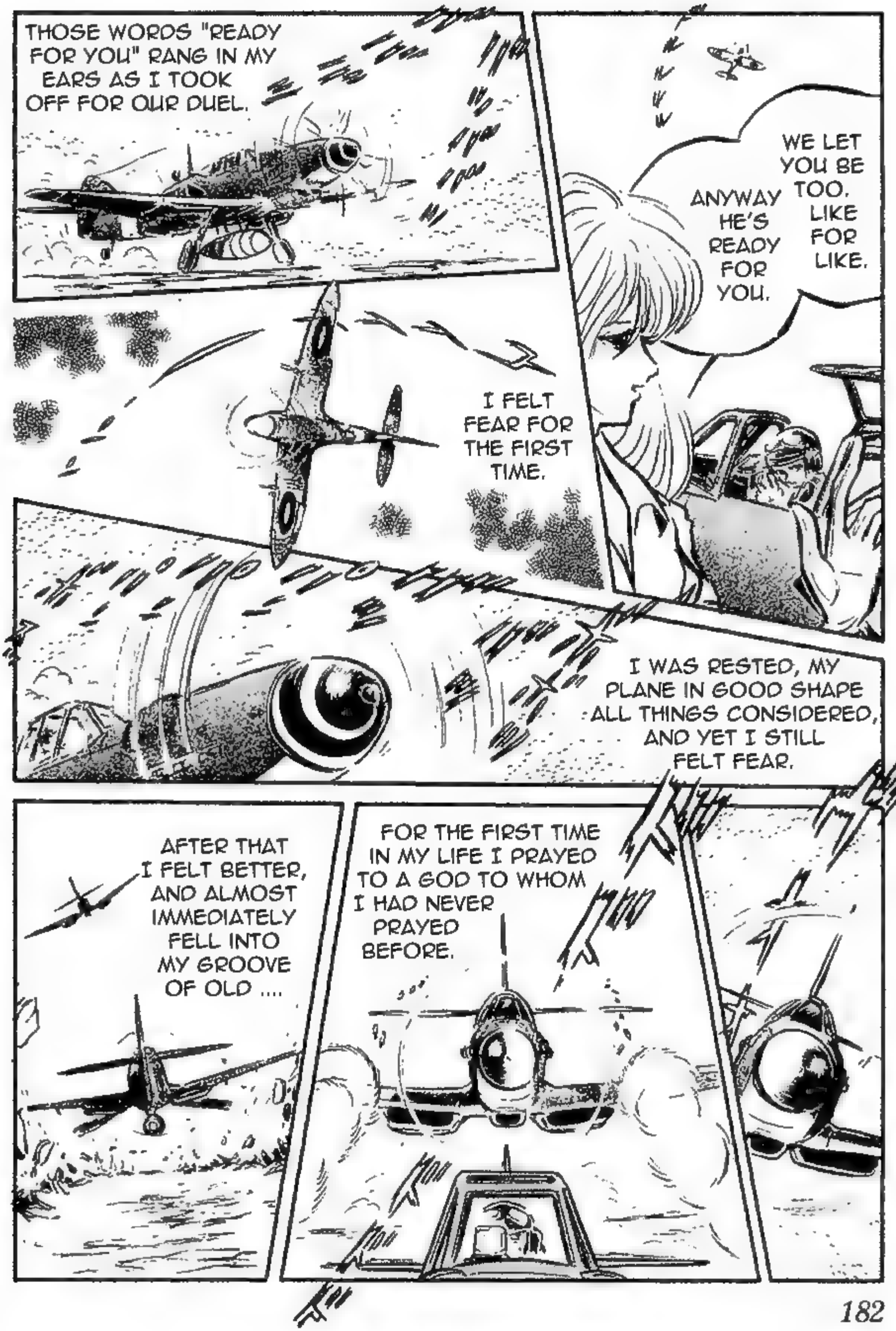
I WASN'T REALLY NAPPING. I JUST WANTED TO GIVE THEM ONE LAST TIME TOGETHER WITHOUT ME AROUND TO MESS IT UP.

I HAD NO DOUBT AS TO WHO WOULD WIN OUR LITTLE DUEL.

LANDALE DESERVED THAT FOR HONORING OUR TRUCE.

BUT WE HAD ENGAGED A GENTLEMAN'S CODE, AND SO WE WERE HONOR BOUND TO RESPECT IT ... AT LEAST IN THIS LITTLE CORNER OF THE WAR.

WHAT TH--?!


THOSE WORDS "READY FOR YOU" RANG IN MY EARS AS I TOOK OFF FOR OUR DUEL.
I FELT FEAR FOR THE FIRST TIME.
ANYWAY HE'S READY FOR YOU.
WE LET YOU BE TOO. LIKE FOR LIKE.
I WAS RESTED, MY PLANE IN GOOD SHAPE ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, AND YET I STILL FELT FEAR.
AFTER THAT I FELT BETTER, AND ALMOST IMMEDIATELY FELL INTO MY GROOVE OF OLD ....
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I PRAYED TO A GOD TO WHOM I HAD NEVER PRAYED BEFORE.

AS HE WAS ALREADY IN THE AIR HE CAME DOWN ON ME, AND TRIED TO FORCE ME INTO THE GROUND.

FURTHERMORE, THE SPITFIRE IS BETTER AT LOW ALTITUDE THAN THE BF-109, AND LANDALE KNEW THAT.

HIS CLAIM TO HAVE FOUGHT THE OLDER "EMIL" BEFORE PROVED TO BE TRUE IN HIS TACTICS.

SHIT! HE'S GOT MY SIX!*

YOU'RE ON FIRE!

CATHERINE WAS RIGHT. LANTREE'S ATTACK HAD SUCCEEDED IN IGNITING MY AUXILIARY FUEL TANK.

(*) "GOT MY SIX" – DIRECTLY BEHIND AN ENEMY AIRCRAFT, AND THE IDEAL POSITION FROM WHICH TO DESTROY IT.

I HAD BEEN FIGHTING A SLUGGISH ENGINE ALL THROUGH THE DUEL UP TO THAT POINT, AND THEN IT SUDDENLY ROARED TO LIFE. HE HAD WARMED IT UP FOR ME.

THE BURNING DROP TANK AND ITS SMOKE PLUME ALSO BLOCKED HIS LINE OF SIGHT ON ME.

I PROMPTLY JETTISONED THE TANK AND THANKED GOD FOR THIS STRANGE FAVOR.

NOW IT WAS MY TURN, AND THE LANDSCAPE SPUN EVEN AS I SPUN UP, OVER, AND BEHIND HIM.

OHH

FOR THE "GUSTAV" WAS MORE CAPABLE THAN THE "EMIL," A FACT OF WHICH LANDALE WAS NOT FULLY AWARE UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE.

KLIK!

MY NOSE-MOUNTED TWIN MACHINE GUNS AND 20MM CANNON TORE HIS SPITFIRE APART.

I KNOW.
I'M SORRY, CATHERINE. IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY WAY TO SAVE HIM ....
LANDALE COULDN'T BAIL OUT IN TIME. HE WAS CAUGHT IN THE EXPLOSION OF HIS PLANE.
NO. IF I GO WITH YOU I'D BE A PRISONER. NEVER AGAIN.
NEED A LIFT?
I CAN PUT YOU IN MY TAIL.
I HAD WON OUT DUEL.

THAT HATEFUL LOOK OF A WOMAN WHO HAS ENDURED THE TENDER MERCIES OF THE GESTAPO.

I DIDN'T ASK AND SHE DIDN'T TELL ME, BUT I COULD SEE IT IN HER EYES.

... AND AS THIS WAS A GENTLEMAN'S DUEL, AND AS THEY USED TO SAY, "TO THE VICTOR BELONG THE SPOILS."

THANK YOU. I SHOULD GIVE BACK ...

HERE. TAKE IT.

ENJOY YOUR SPOILS.

HOW COULD I REFUSE? AFTER ALL, I HAD WON AND SHE WAS DEFINITELY WILLING. SO I CLAIMED MY PRIZE ...

... AND AT THE END, AFTER WE WERE DONE, I TOOK OFF ALONE.

I SOON LOST ALL SIGHT OF HER. TO THIS DAY I DON'T KNOW WHAT BECAME OF HER.

AFTER I TOOK OFF THE SAND BEGAN TO BLOW.

THE BRITISH HAVE NO RECORDS OF HER RESCUE.

THE AFRIKA KORPS WAS DEFEATED SOON AFTER, AND THE THIRD REICH A FEW YEARS LATER, BUT I NEVER LOST MY MEMORY OF THAT ENCOUNTER WITH CATHERINE.

I ASKED HER TO COME WITH ME ONE LAST TIME BEFORE LEAVING, BUT SHE STILL SAID NO. I KNEW WHY. I DIDN'T ASK AGAIN.

I AM WALTER VON REINHARDT, FORMER GERMAN FLYING ACE AND WINNER OF THE IRON CROSS FIRST CLASS FOR MY SERVICE IN AFRICA.

I FOUGHT HONORABLY AND I HAVE NOTHING OF WHICH I SHOULD BE ASHAMED ...

... AND YET SOMETIMES I THINK IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER HAD I BEEN THE ONE TO DIE THERE AT EL ALAMEIN.

<Published in Play Comic, August 10, 1969 issue>

THE IRON CROSS OF AFRICA

LEIJI
MATSUMOTO
PRESENTS

THE COCKPIT

OBSERVATION POST 67 HAS SPOTTED A LONE BRITISH RECON PLANE ...

... HEADING TOWARDS US FROM ACROSS THE DF LINE. SEND AN INTERCEPT!

OKAY, HOW FAST?

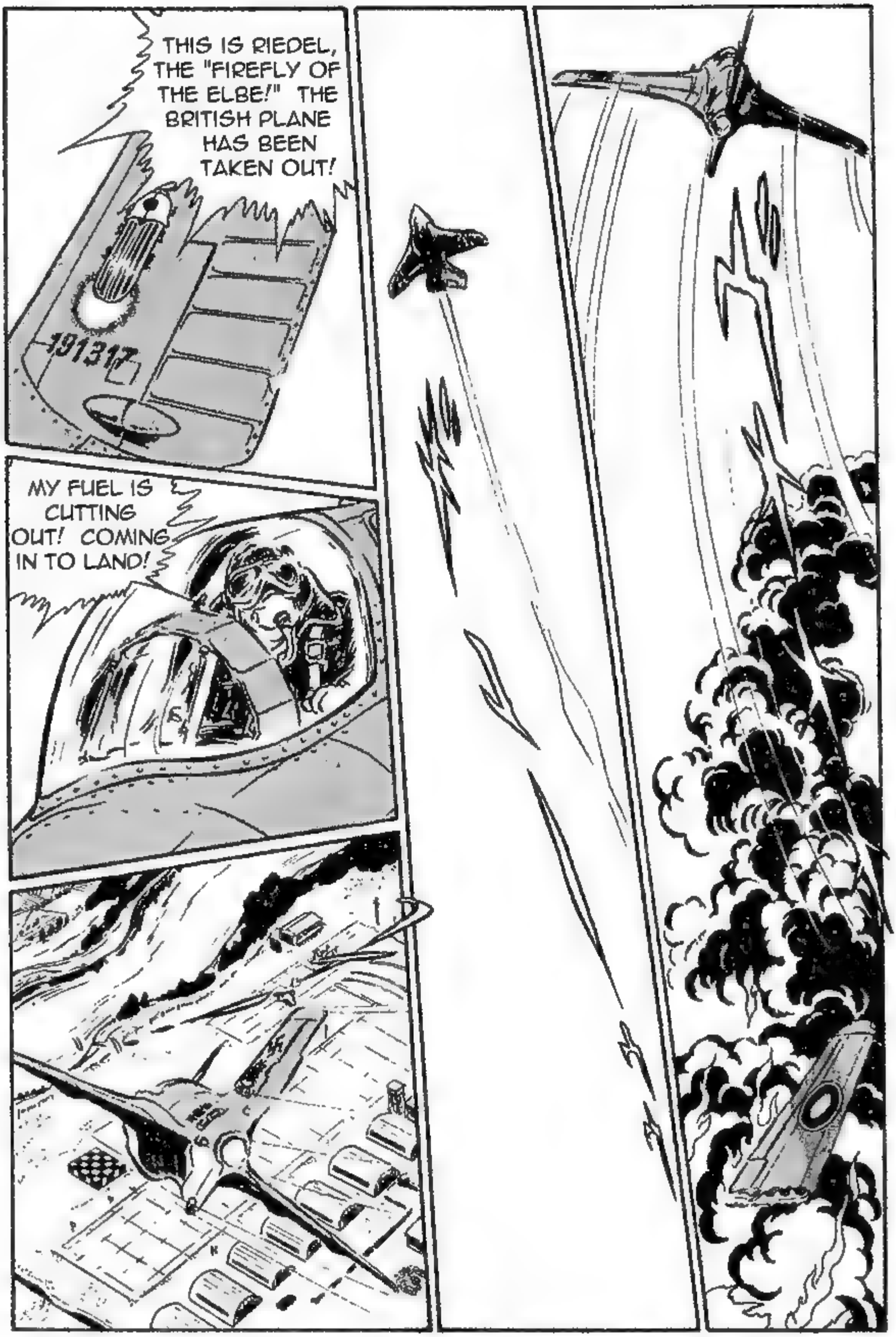
SOMETHING'S BEHIND US AND COMING UP FAST!

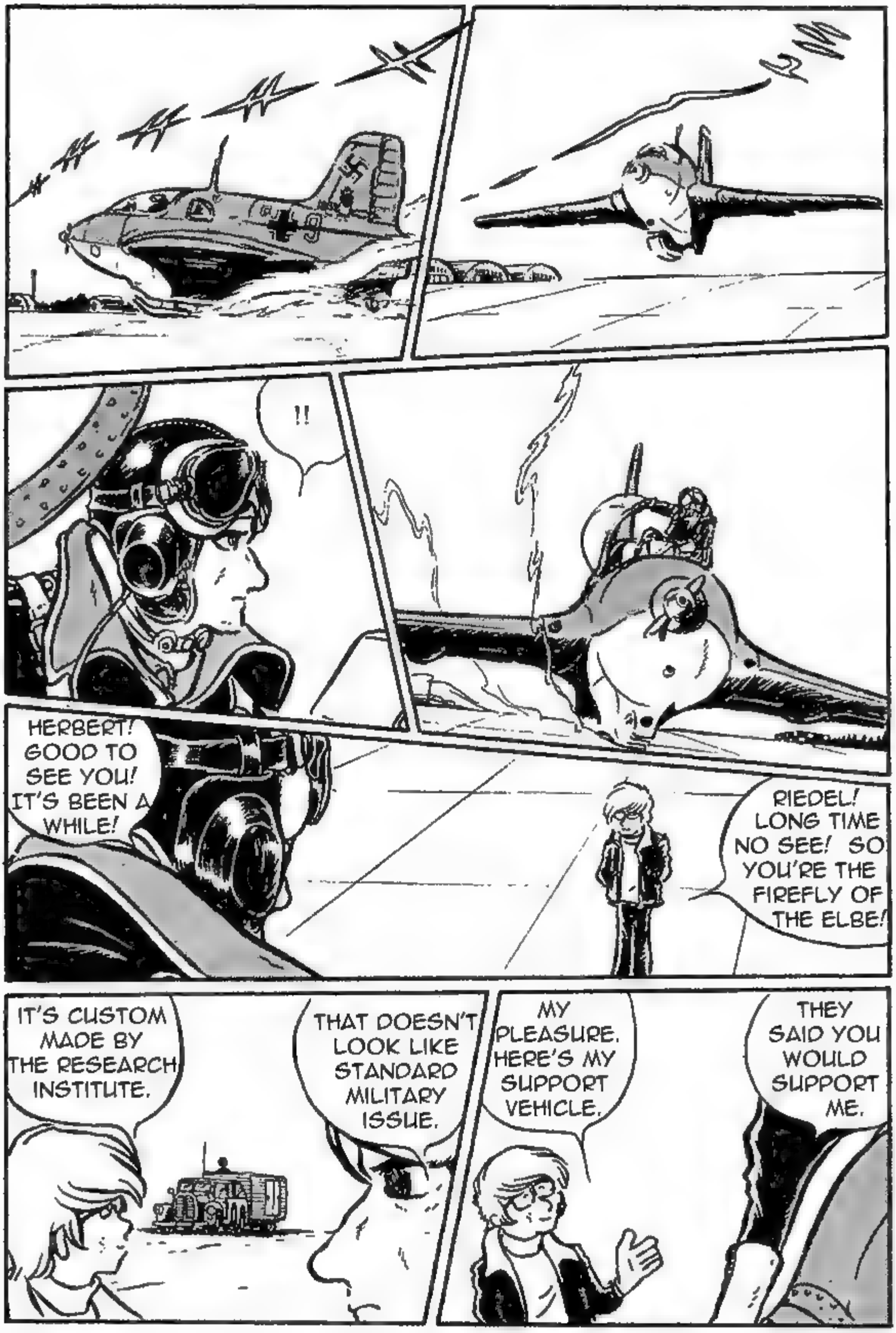
I'M TELLING YA ...

WHY DO YOU KEEP LOOKING BACK? DON'T WORRY! THIS IS A MOSQUITO! IT'S GOT A GOOD TRACK RECORD--

LIKE A HAWK DIVING ON ITS PREY!

FIREFLIES ON THE ELBE


THIS IS RIEDEL, THE "FIREFLY OF THE ELBE!" THE BRITISH PLANE HAS BEEN TAKEN OUT!
191317
MY FUEL IS CUTTING OUT! COMING IN TO LAND!


!!
HERBERT! GOOD TO SEE YOU! IT'S BEEN A WHILE!
RIEDEL! LONG TIME NO SEE! SO YOU'RE THE FIREFLY OF THE ELBE!
IT'S CUSTOM MADE BY THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE.
THAT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE STANDARD MILITARY ISSUE.
MY PLEASURE. HERE'S MY SUPPORT VEHICLE.
THEY SAID YOU WOULD SUPPORT ME.

AND IN COMBAT?

I JUST WISH IT HAD MORE POWERED COMBAT TIME.

A NEAT PLANE.

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE KOMET?

PROBABLY NOT EVEN IN OUR SOLAR SYSTEM.

AS LONG AS I HAVE FUEL AND THE ENGINE CONTINUES TO WORK, THERE'S NOTHING MAN-MADE FASTER IN THE AIR.

I BELIEVE THAT THERE'S OTHER KINDS OF LIFE OUT THERE, AND WITH ROCKETS WE MIGHT MEET ONE DAY.

I'M A SCIENTIST, NOT A QUACK, RIEDEL.

STILL DREAMING THE OLD DREAM, I SEE. HAS THE VRIL SOCIETY* DRAFTED YOU YET, HERBERT?

THAT'S ... QUITE A DREAM.

MY DREAM IS FOR MAN TO GO TO THE MOON AND EVEN BEYOND!

YOUR DREAM IS TO FIGHT FOR AND DIE FOR GERMANY, RIGHT?

(*) THE VRIL SOCIETY (DE. *VRIL GESELLSCHAFT*) WAS SUPPOSEDLY A SECRET SOCIETY THAT EXISTED BEFORE THE NAZIS AND HELPED THEM COVERTLY IN THEIR RISE TO POWER. BELIEF IN EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE WAS BUT ONE OF THE MANY THINGS THEY WERE INTO ...

PROVIDED I DON'T DIE IN THIS WAR FIRST AND CAN CONTINUE MY WORK.

AND YOU'D LIKE TO MEET THEM.

THANK YOU, RIEDEL. I'M HONORED.

YOU KNOW, I WON'T PRETEND TO BELIEVE IN FOO FIGHTERS* AND ALL THAT, BUT I DO RESPECT THAT BIG A DREAM.

AND OUT HERE I GET TO SEE FOR MYSELF HOW IT REALLY WORKS.

I'M A VOLUNTEER. I'M ONE OF THE PEOPLE WHO HELPED MAKE THE KOMET.

SO WHY ARE YOU HERE?

WE'RE WORKING ON THAT.

WELL, I CAN TELL YOU ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW IN A FEW WORDS. IT'S FANTASTIC BUT NEEDS MORE FLIGHT TIME.

OUR 1200163A ROCKET ENGINE IS VIRTUALLY FRESH OFF THE DRAWING BOARD! THERE'S BEEN NO TIME TO REFINE IT!

WE KNEW FLIGHT TIME WOULD BE A BIG PROBLEM.

THEY'RE FAR TOO VOLATILE AND REQUIRE SPECIAL HANDLING. AS MANY PILOTS HAVE DIED IN FUEL EXPLOSIONS AS IN COMBAT.

ON TOP OF THAT THE FUELS WE HAD TO USE ARE NOT IDEAL.

 (*) "FOO FIGHTER" – ONE OF THE MOST COMMON WWII ERA TERMS FOR A U.F.O. THE ACTUAL GERMAN TERM FOR THEM WAS *FEUERBALL*, I.E. "FIREBALL."

OF COURSE YOU KNOW THAT EVERY TIME YOU GO UP YOU'RE FLYING A MANMADE ETHANOL BOMB, WITH THAT HYDROGEN PEROXIDE AND HYDRAZINE MIXTURE YOU'RE USING AS FUEL. ONE LITTLE LEAK, EVEN A MIST ...

HE'LL HAVE TO DUMP HIS FUEL--

TOWER! MY FUEL RELEASE VALVE HAS JAMMED!

GLIDE IT BACK IN AS BEST YOU CAN! FIRE TEAM, GET READY!!

HIS ENGINE CUT OUT.

IT DIDN'T EXPLODE! A MIRACLE!
OH GOD.
AS I AND EVERYONE ELSE BACK AT THE INSTITUTE TRIED TO TELL THEM, IT'S STILL WAY TOO EARLY TO USE ROCKET PLANES IN COMBAT! DAMN WAR ....
LT. HERMANN GELADEN, SIR.
WHAT WAS HIS NAME?
IT LOOKED LIKE A PEROXIDE FIRE. IT'D HAVE BLOWN UP HAD THE HYDRAZINE TANK BURST TOO. POOR MAN ....
THE PILOT'S DEAD. BURNED TO A CRISP.

EVERYTHING FOR WHICH I AND EVERYONE ELSE BACK AT THE INSTITUTE WORKED FOR ALL THESE YEARS ...

IS BEING PERVERTED BY THE POWERS THAT BE FOR THE PURPOSE OF MAKING WAR, AND FOR KILLING OUR FELLOW MEN ....

YEAH. AFTER YOU AND I ARE BOTH DEAD AND LONG GONE, I FEAR.

THEN SO BE IT ... BUT IT'S STILL A GOOD DREAM.

DON'T GIVE UP HOPE, HERBERT. I MAY BE ONLY A WARRIOR ...

... BUT I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HAVE AND THEN LIVE A DREAM. YOU'VE GOT A BIG DREAM. YOUR DAY WILL COME, SOMEDAY ....

MANNED ROCKETS SHOULD NOT BE USED FOR WAR ...

... BUT FOR GOING TO THE MOON, AND PERHAPS BEYOND.

HEH! THAT'S BEEN A WHILE.

REMEMBER THE LEGEND I GAVE IT? "HERE WE LEAVE OUR FOOTPRINTS ON THE MOON, GERMAN SPACE EXPLORERS WALTER VON RIEDEL AND HANS CHRISTIAN HERBERT."

I STILL HAVE IT.

REMEMBER THAT DRAWING I DID WHEN WE WERE BOTH IN GYMNASIUM?*

THE V-2 IS SUB-ORBITAL AND CAN REACH LONDON.

BUT WITH THE KOMET HAVING ONLY EIGHT MINUTES OF FLIGHT TIME ....

THAT WON'T LAST.

DR. VON BRAUN MADE IT CLEAR HE INTENDS THAT FOR EXPLORING SPACE--

AND WE'RE ALREADY PLANNING THE A-12,** THE AGGREGAT.

YEAH. HITLER'LL-- HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

TAKING A SWIM.

I'M FINE! DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!

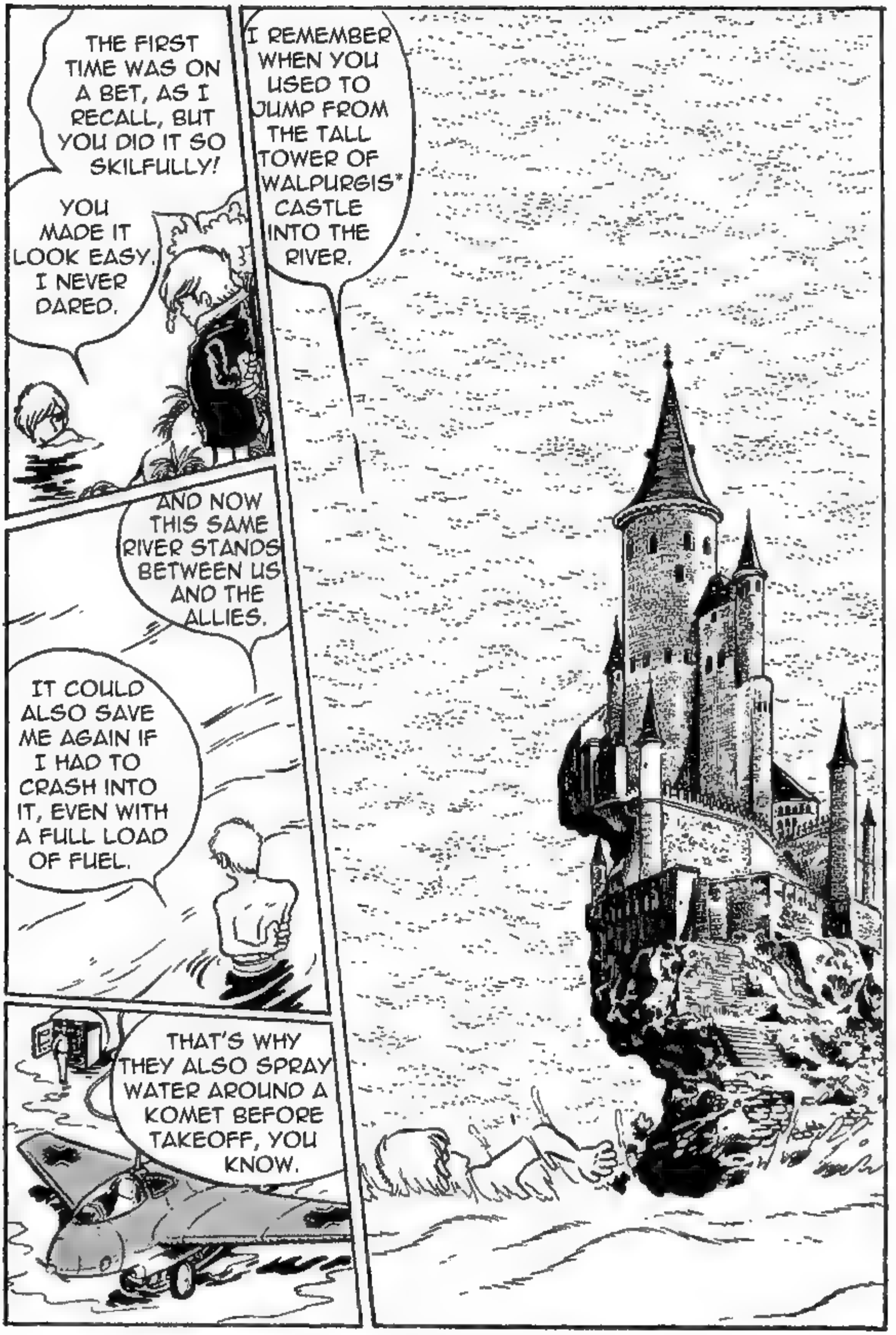
BUT THE ICE! THE FREEZING WATER!

ACHTUNG

IT'S A MULTI-STAGE ROCKET SYSTEM THAT'LL PUT US UP IN ORBIT, AND GET US READY FOR THE BIG LEAP INTO SPACE.

(*) *GYMNASIUM* (GIM-NAH-ZE-UHM) - THE GERMAN TERM FOR HIGH SCHOOL. I LEARNED THAT FROM *HOGAN'S HEROES*, BELIEVE IT OR NOT! (R.M.)

(**) MATSUMOTO CALLS THIS THE "V-12" IN HIS ORIGINAL TEXT, WHICH WAS A COMMON ERROR MADE AT THE TIME BY MANY PEOPLE GIVEN THE LIMITED INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON AGGREGAT BACK IN THE 1970S.


THE FIRST TIME WAS ON A BET, AS I RECALL, BUT YOU DID IT SO SKILFULLY!
I REMEMBER WHEN YOU USED TO JUMP FROM THE TALL TOWER OF WALPURGIS* CASTLE INTO THE RIVER.
YOU MADE IT LOOK EASY. I NEVER DARED.
AND NOW THIS SAME RIVER STANDS BETWEEN US AND THE ALLIES.
IT COULD ALSO SAVE ME AGAIN IF I HAD TO CRASH INTO IT, EVEN WITH A FULL LOAD OF FUEL.
THAT'S WHY THEY ALSO SPRAY WATER AROUND A KOMET BEFORE TAKEOFF, YOU KNOW.

(*) THERE NEVER WAS A *SCHLOSS* (CASTLE) *WALPURGIS* IN GERMANY IN REAL LIFE, OF COURSE; HOWEVER AND PER MATSUMOTO'S ABOVE ILLUSTRATION HIS FICTIONAL CASTLE MAY HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY THE REAL LIFE SCHLOSS LICHTENSTEIN IN BADEN-WÜRTTENBURG.

(SOUND OF AIR RAID SIRENS)

THEY DESTROYED THE CASTLE! DAMN THEM ALL!!

THEY MUST HAVE COME IN LOW AND GOT UNDER OUR RADAR!

A TYPH-OON!*

145 (*) "A TYPHOON!" – THE BRITISH HAWKER TYPHOON, WHICH IN ITS LATE WAR INCARNATION (THE "BOMBPHOON") WAS ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SINGLE ENGINE GROUND ATTACK AIRCRAFT OF THE WAR.

LOOKS LIKE WE'RE THEIR PRIMARY TARGET.

TOO BAD FOR THEM THEY'RE UNDERGROUND AND REINFORCED. A 1-TON BOMB WOULDN'T WORK

THEY TRIED FOR THE FUEL BUNKERS.

OH MY GOD ... ! THE TOWN ... THE WHOLE TOWN! WHY?! THEY DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG!

NO!

THE BASE WASN'T THEIR ONLY TARGET.

LET'S GO!

TELL THAT TO THAT SCHWINEHUND "BOMBER HARRIS."

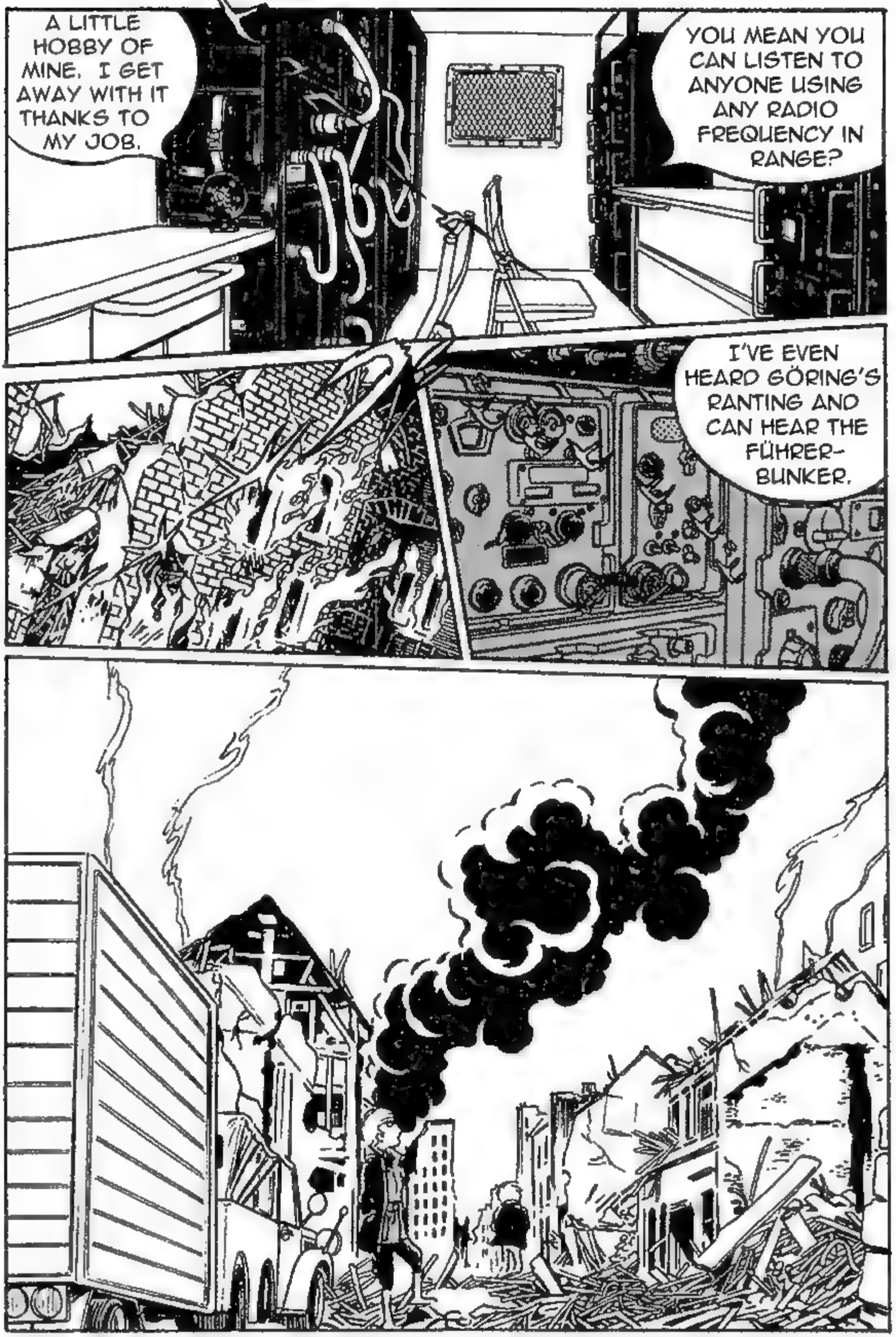
GET READY TO INTER -CEPT!

FROM GG77 TO GX8, 220 B-17S ARE HEADING EAST!

WHA-?

IT'LL BE FINE AND WE MAY NEED IT!

YOUR TRAILER IS PACKED FULL OF RADIO GEAR. WANT TO LEAVE IT?


A LITTLE HOBBY OF MINE. I GET AWAY WITH IT THANKS TO MY JOB.
YOU MEAN YOU CAN LISTEN TO ANYONE USING ANY RADIO FREQUENCY IN RANGE?
I'VE EVEN HEARD GÖRING'S RANTING AND CAN HEAR THE FÜHRER-BUNKER.

REMEMBER HANNAH?
HANS ...
WE WERE TO BE MARRIED.
HOW COULD I FORGET HANNAH, YOUR ... OH GOD.
REMEMBER HOW WE USED TO SWIM TOGETHER IN THE ELBE AT WALPURGIS CASTLE?
SHE ... SHE WAS SO ....
IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU, ANYTHING ....
I'M SO SORRY, HANS! TRULY I AM!

I NEED TO BE ALONE RIGHT NOW. OKAY?
WANT ME TO DRIVE?
I ... I'M HEADING BACK TO THE INSTITUTE, RIEDEL.
SURE. SAY GOODBYE TO HANNAH FOR ME, OKAY?
I'LL BE THERE.
I WILL. I'LL BE BACK AT THE BASE IN A COUPLE OF DAYS.
I WILL, HANS.
STAY ALIVE, RIEDEL, UNTIL I GET BACK! DO YOU HEAR?

AH! DOCTOR HERBERT! YOU'RE SAFE! WE FEARED THE WORST!

I SEE.

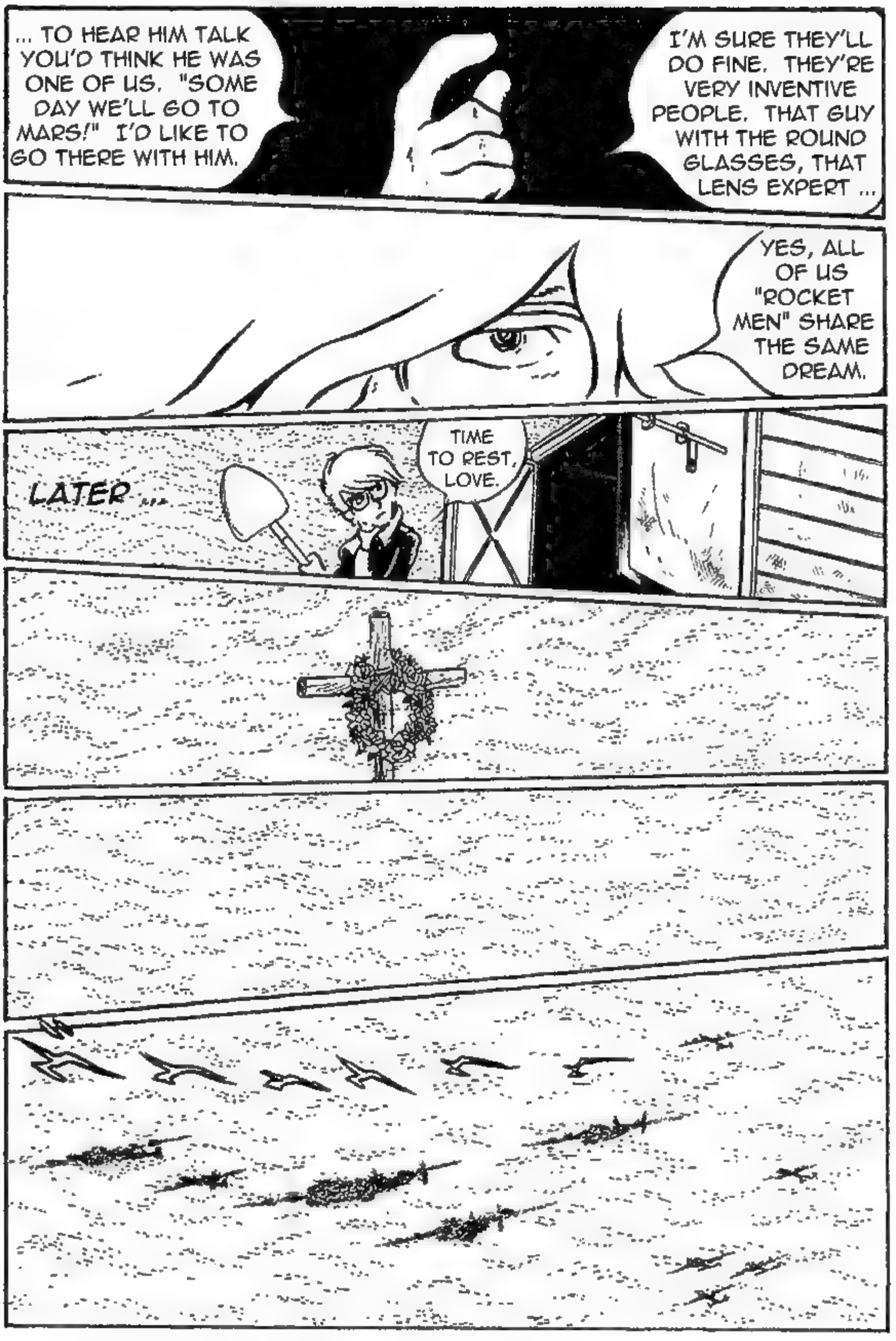
WE GOT TARGETED SAME AS THE BASE.

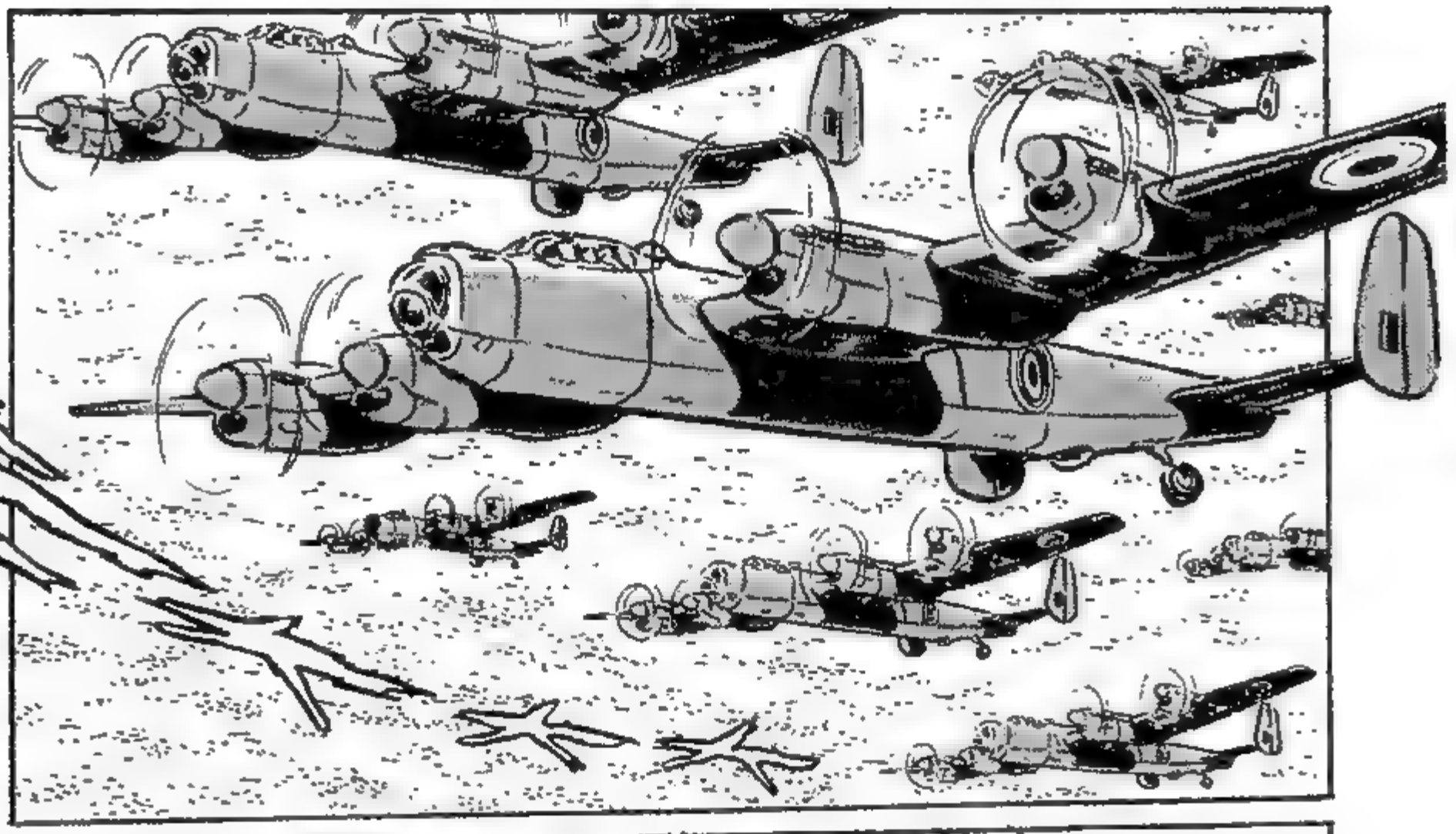
THAT WAS ONE OF THE KOMETS WE WERE GOING TO SEND TO JAPAN. WE WERE JUST GETTING READY TO LOAD IT WHEN THE BOMBERS HIT.

THAT'S ALL THEY'RE GOING TO GET NOW, I'M AFRAID. THAT SUB SHOULD ARRIVE TO PICK THEM UP ANY TIME.

THEY GOT OUT BUT WITH ONLY WHAT THEY COULD CARRY ON THEM. BASIC BLUEPRINTS, ENGINE SPECS, WHATEVER WOULD FIT IN THEIR COATS!

WHAT ABOUT THE JAPANESE PEOPLE?


... TO HEAR HIM TALK YOU'D THINK HE WAS ONE OF US. "SOME DAY WE'LL GO TO MARS!" I'D LIKE TO GO THERE WITH HIM.
I'M SURE THEY'LL DO FINE. THEY'RE VERY INVENTIVE PEOPLE. THAT GUY WITH THE ROUND GLASSES, THAT LENS EXPERT ...
YES, ALL OF US "ROCKET MEN" SHARE THE SAME DREAM.
LATER ...
TIME TO REST, LOVE.



AND EACH OF OURS HAS ONLY EIGHT MINUTES OF FLIGHT TIME.

FORTY.

FLIGHT READY KOMETS?

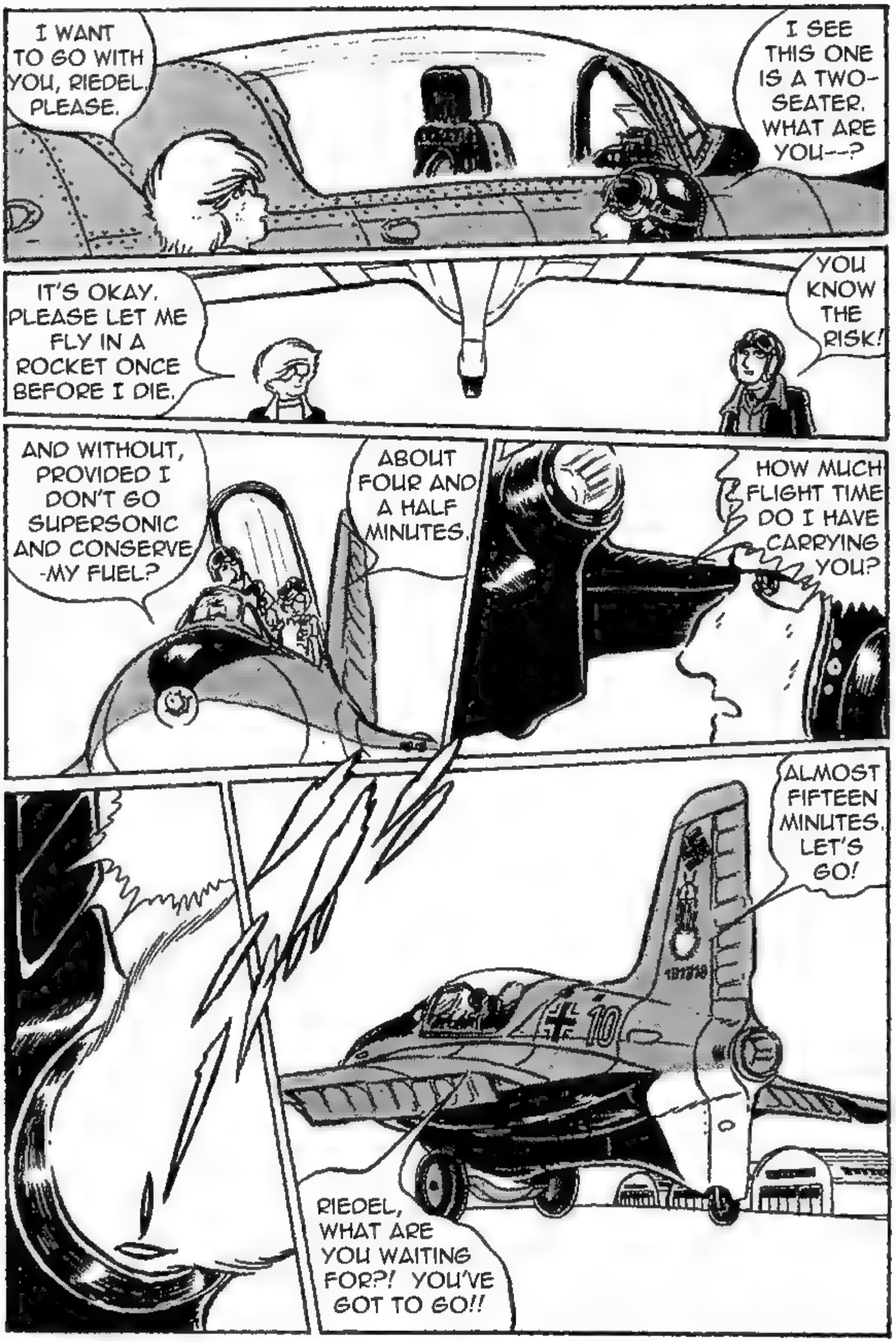
RIEDEL! HUGE FORMATION OF 500 ENEMY AIRCRAFT EN ROUTE TO US!

HERBERT! CAN IT WAIT?! I'VE GOT TO—

THIS ONE CAN GO SUPERSONIC BUT IT CUTS FLIGHT TIME IN HALF.

THE NEW ENGINE! YOU DID IT!

I BROUGHT YOU A NEW ONE! FLY WITH THIS!


I WANT TO GO WITH YOU, RIEDEL. PLEASE.
I SEE THIS ONE IS A TWO-SEATER. WHAT ARE YOU--?
IT'S OKAY. PLEASE LET ME FLY IN A ROCKET ONCE BEFORE I DIE.
YOU KNOW THE RISK!
AND WITHOUT, PROVIDED I DON'T GO SUPERSONIC AND CONSERVE -MY FUEL?
ABOUT FOUR AND A HALF MINUTES.
HOW MUCH FLIGHT TIME DO I HAVE CARRYING YOU?
ALMOST FIFTEEN MINUTES. LET'S GO!
RIEDEL, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?! YOU'VE GOT TO GO!!

NOT TOO MUCH HYDRA-ZINE, OKAY?

BE CAREFUL WITH THE FUEL MIXER!

OK, OK!

DID YOU SAY GOODBYE TO HANNAH FOR ME?

YES. THANK YOU.

QUESTION. WHY DOES YOUR SQUADRON HAVE FIREFLIES PAINTED ON THEIR TAILS?

WE BURN BRIGHT BUT ONLY FOR A WHILE.

IT'S ALL RIGHT.

OH! I'M SO SORRY! FORGIVE ME.

MY GIRLFRIEND. SHE LIVED IN DRESDEN. SHE DIED WHEN IT WAS FIRE-BOMBED.

WHO CAME UP WITH THAT? IT'S PERFECT.

LET'S TEACH 'EM WHAT SPEED IS!

THEY LOOK SO SLOW!

YOU'VE ONLY GOT FOUR--NO, THREE MINUTES! MAKE THE MOST OF IT, RIEDEL!

BAM BOOM

GREAT!!! BUT WAY TOO SHORT!!!

WELL? HOW'D YOU LIKE IT, HERBERT?

I WILL! THANKS AGAIN, RIEDEL!!

SO MAKE A BETTER ONE!

THEY'RE HEADING FOR THE AIRFIELD!

DAMMIT! ALLIED TANKS!!

IF I TIME IT RIGHT, I CAN LAND AHEAD OF THEM ...

I'M ALMOST OUT OF FUEL, HERBERT!

... YOU CAN HELP REFUEL FROM THE UNDERGROUND TANKS, AND I CAN GO AGAIN!

THEN LET'S HURRY BEFORE THOSE TANKS GET HERE!!!

AT LEAST THE PUMPING STATION'S GOOD!

GLAD TO HELP, RIEDEL. WHAT A MESS!

AH!

SIR! ABOVE US!!

IS THAT ALL OF THOSE THINGS?

GLUG! GLUG! GLUG! GLUG! GLUG!

KA-THOOM!!!

RIEDEL!!!

SHE'S ALL FUELED UP AND--

HEY!

THIS LAST IS A SOLO FLIGHT, HANS! LIVE AND GO TO MARS FOR US BOTH!

BLARGH!

SPLASH!!

... WAFTED INTO THE SKY, NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN.

A DEAD GERMAN WOMAN'S IMPRESSION BECAME REALITY ON THAT NIGHT, AS THOSE SEEMING FIREFLIES OF THE ELBE ...

TO MANY WHO SAW THE KOMET AIRFIELD BURN, IT LOOKED AS IF THOUSANDS OF FIREFLIES WERE RISING INTO THE SKY. IT WAS ONLY HOT CINDERS RISING, OF COURSE, BUT ALL THE SAME ....

EVERY TIME I THINK OF IT, THAT SIGHT STIRS MY HEART.

BOTH BANKS OF THE ELBE WERE LIT BY THAT GREAT FIREBALL. ONCE IT WAS DONE THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT.

DAS ENDE

(Published in Big Comic Original, October 5, 1976 issue)

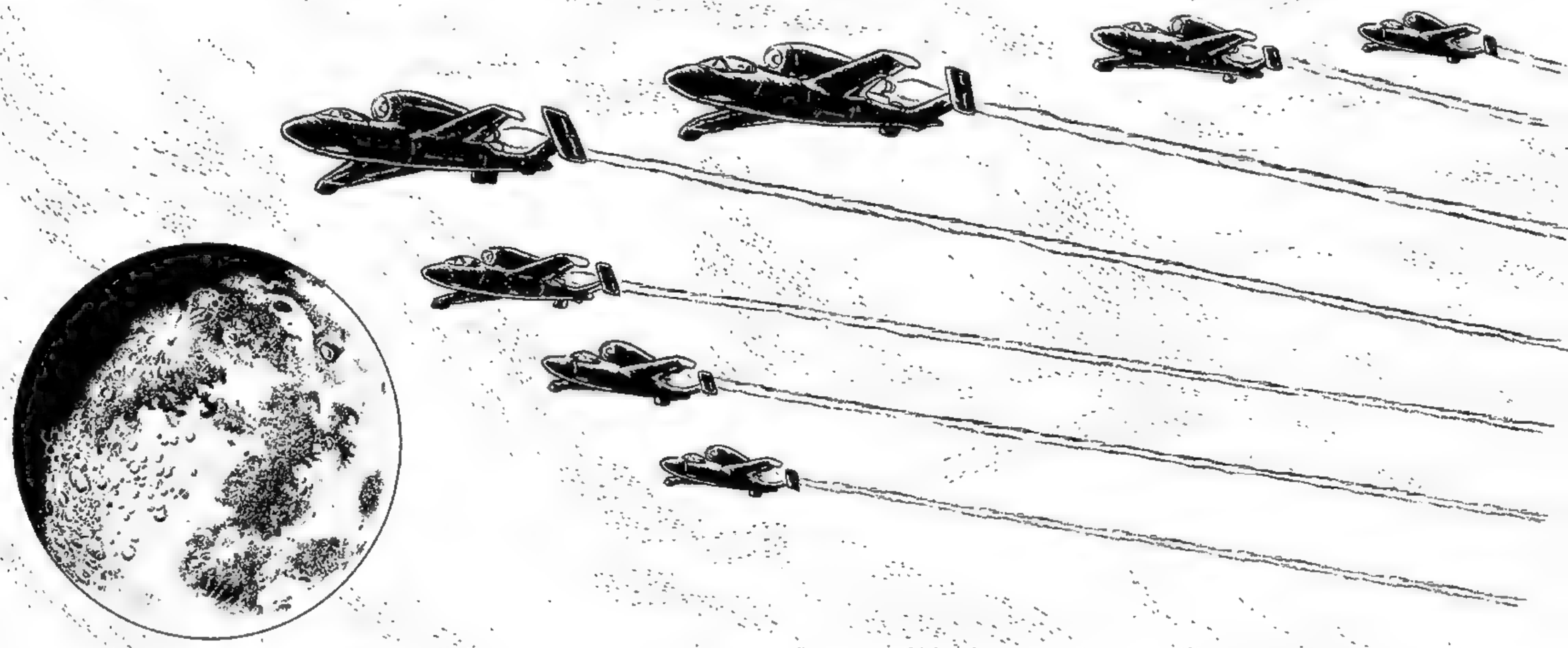
LEIJI
MATSUMOTO
PRESENTS

THE COCKPIT

AH, TRANSYLVANIA! DID YOU KNOW THAT LAND OF MACABRE LEGEND, BEST KNOW FOR ITS NATIVE SON AND RESIDENT VAMPIRE DRACULA, HAD ITS PART TO PLAY IN THE WAR?

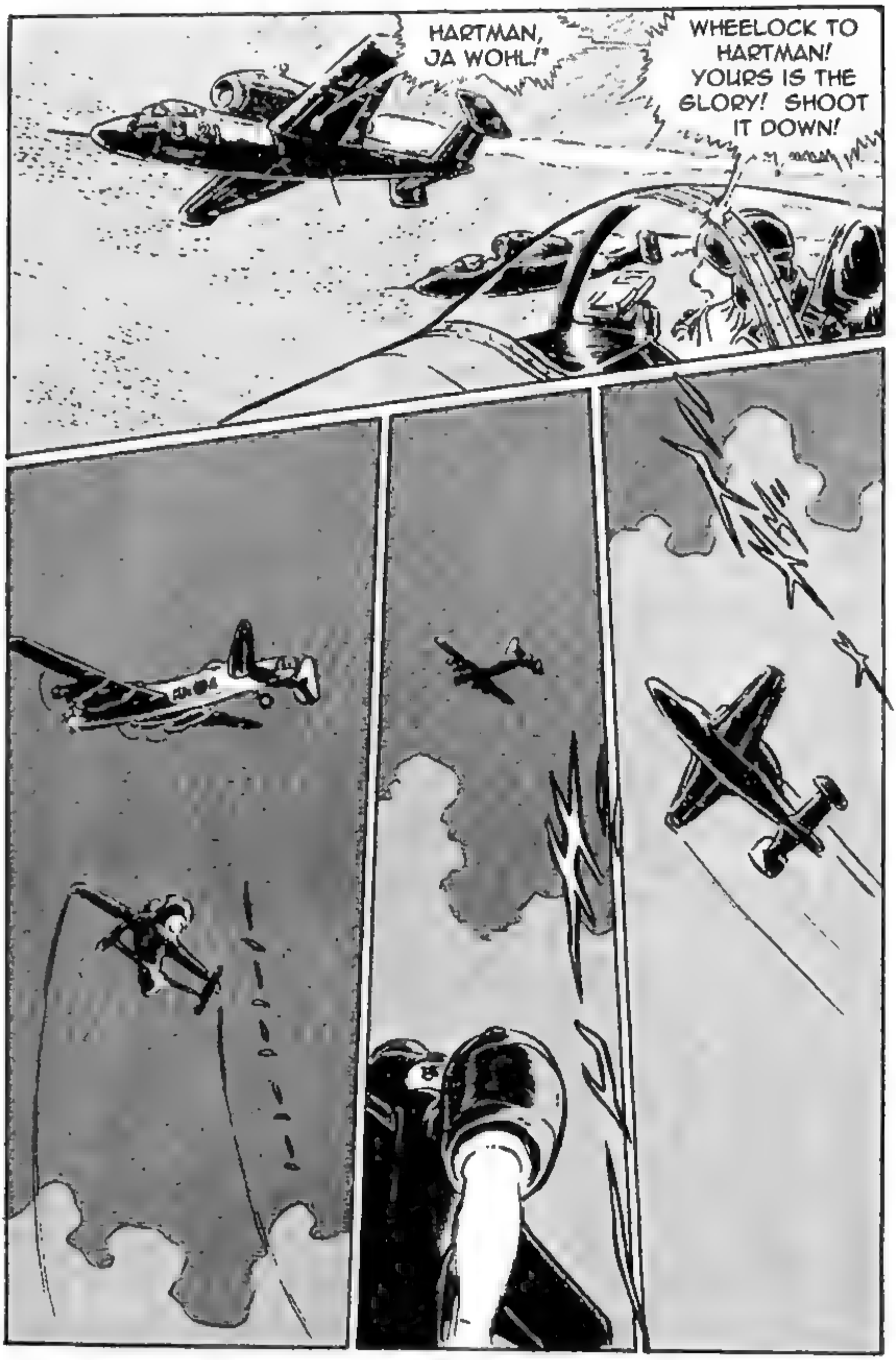
THE SEVEN KNIGHTS OF THE DEMON LEGEND

WE WILL NOT TELL OF THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE AMONG TWO OF THE LESSER AXIS POWERS OVER IT. NO, TODAY WE WILL TELL OF ITS SEVEN SKY DEMONS LATE IN THE WAR ....

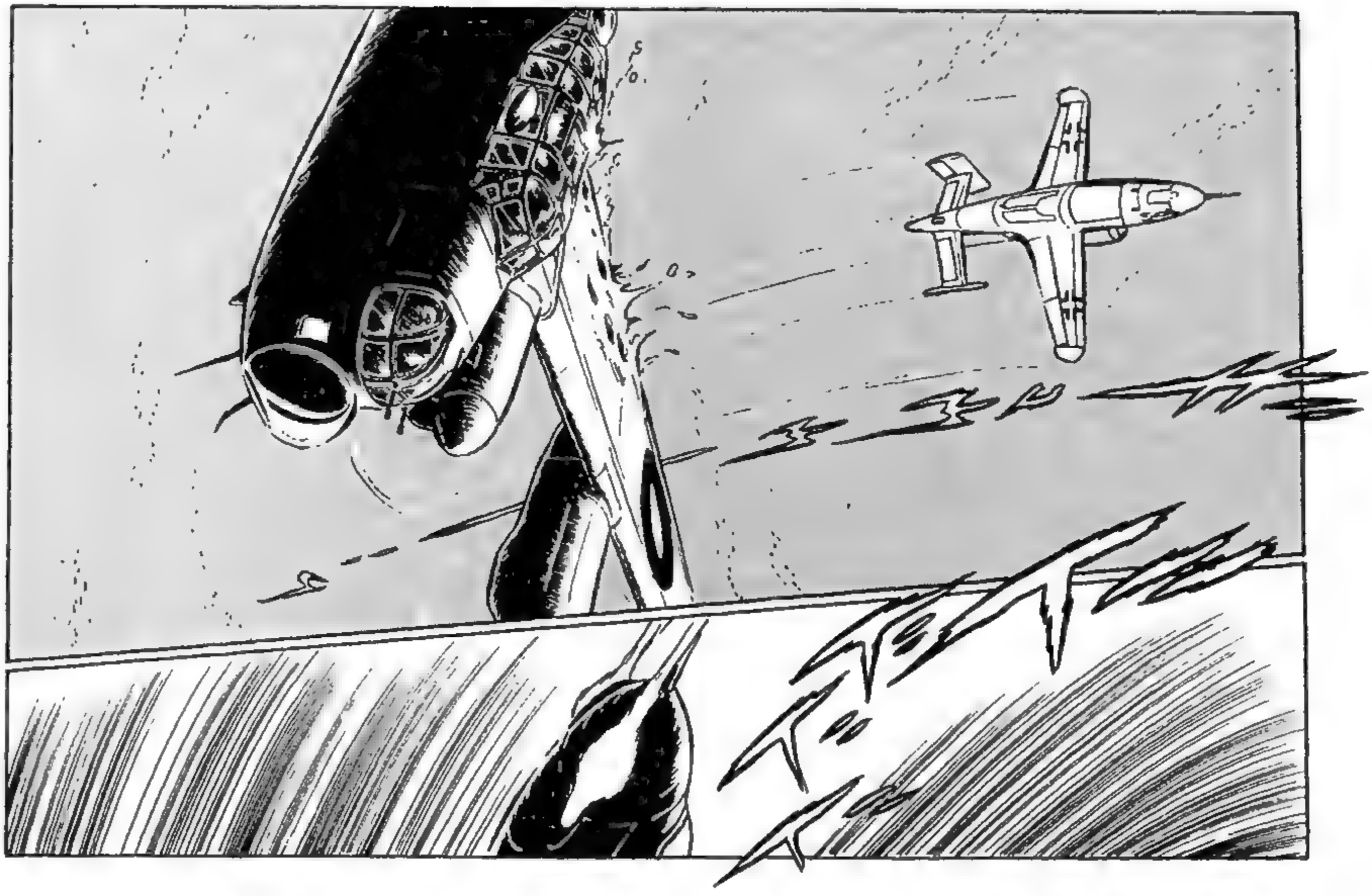


HARTMAN! THIS IS WHEELOCK! BRITISH LANCASTER ABOVE YOU, OVER!

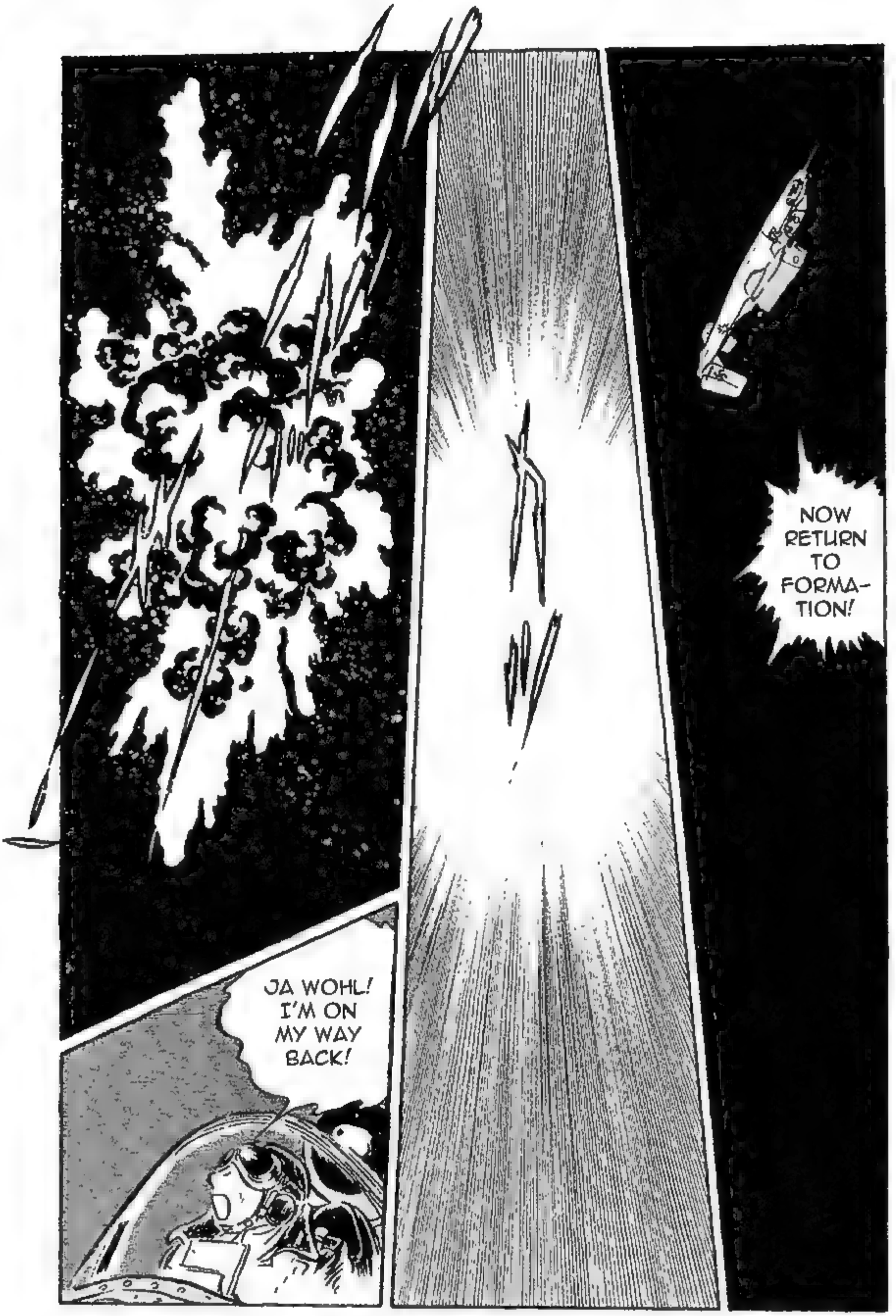
THIS IS HARTMAN! I SEE IT! ABOUT 1000 METERS UP IN THE CLOUDS!



(*) JA WOHL! - GERMAN ANALOG OF THE ENGLISH "YES SIR!" MORE LITERALLY "IT WILL BE DONE, SIR!"



GOOD JOB, HARTMAN! GREAT KILL!

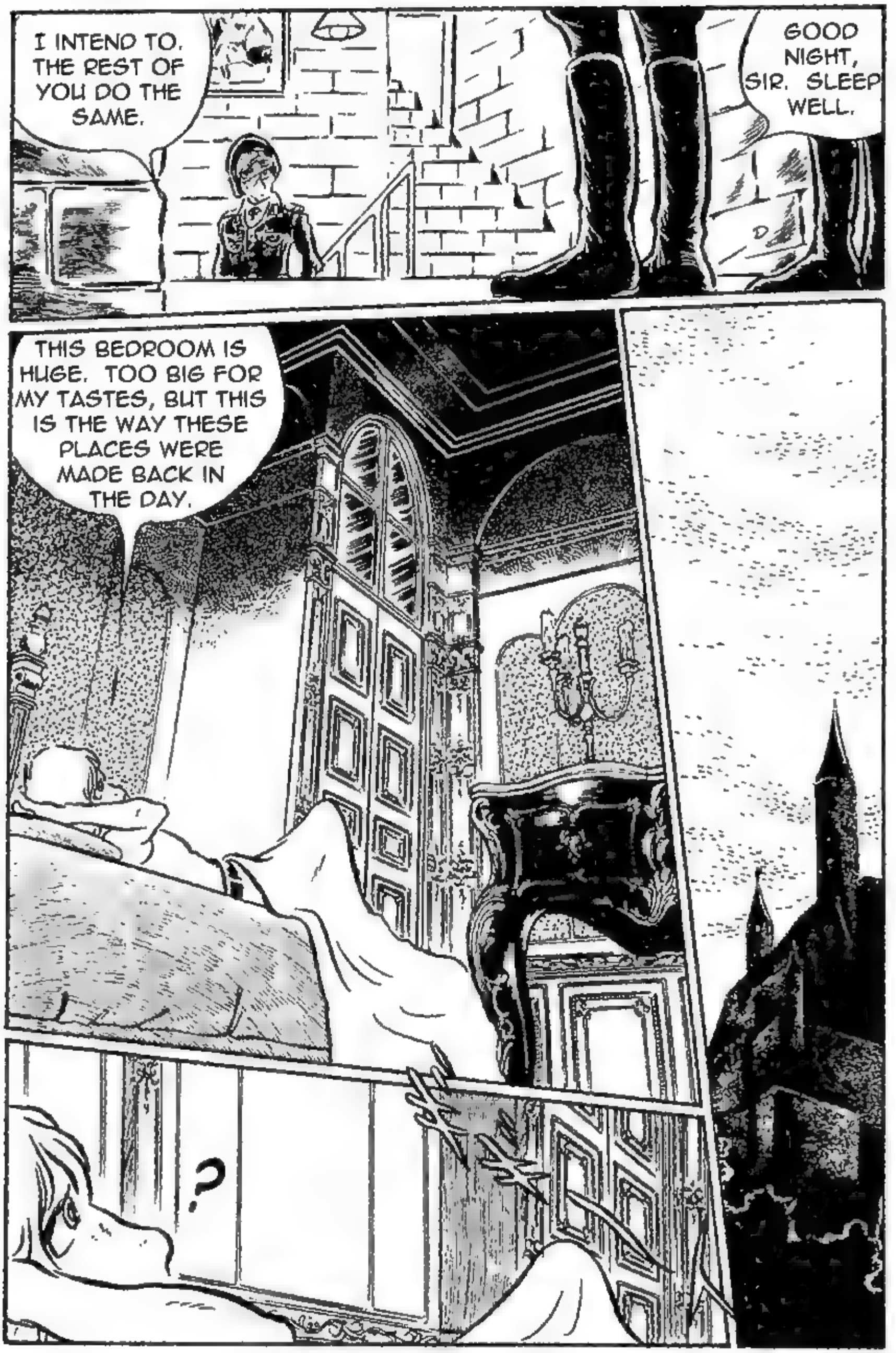

NOW RETURN TO FORMA-TION!
JA WOHL! I'M ON MY WAY BACK!

AND THAT'S THAT.

IT'S STILL VERY EARLY IN "VOLKSJÄGER" DEVELOP-MENT.
IF I HAD MY WAY NO GREEN PILOT WOULD FLY IT. IT'S VERY TRICKY.
YET THE CONTROLS ARE SIMPLE AND IT'S EASY TO MAKE.
WE'LL HAVE MORE THAN SIX AND PILOTS TO FLY THEM SOON ENOUGH.
AND THIS OLD CASTLE THAT THE RUMANIAN GOVERNMENT LENT US FOR TESTING!
YES. ITS BIG ENOUGH TO HOUSE ALL SIX OUT OF SIGHT FROM THE ALLIES.

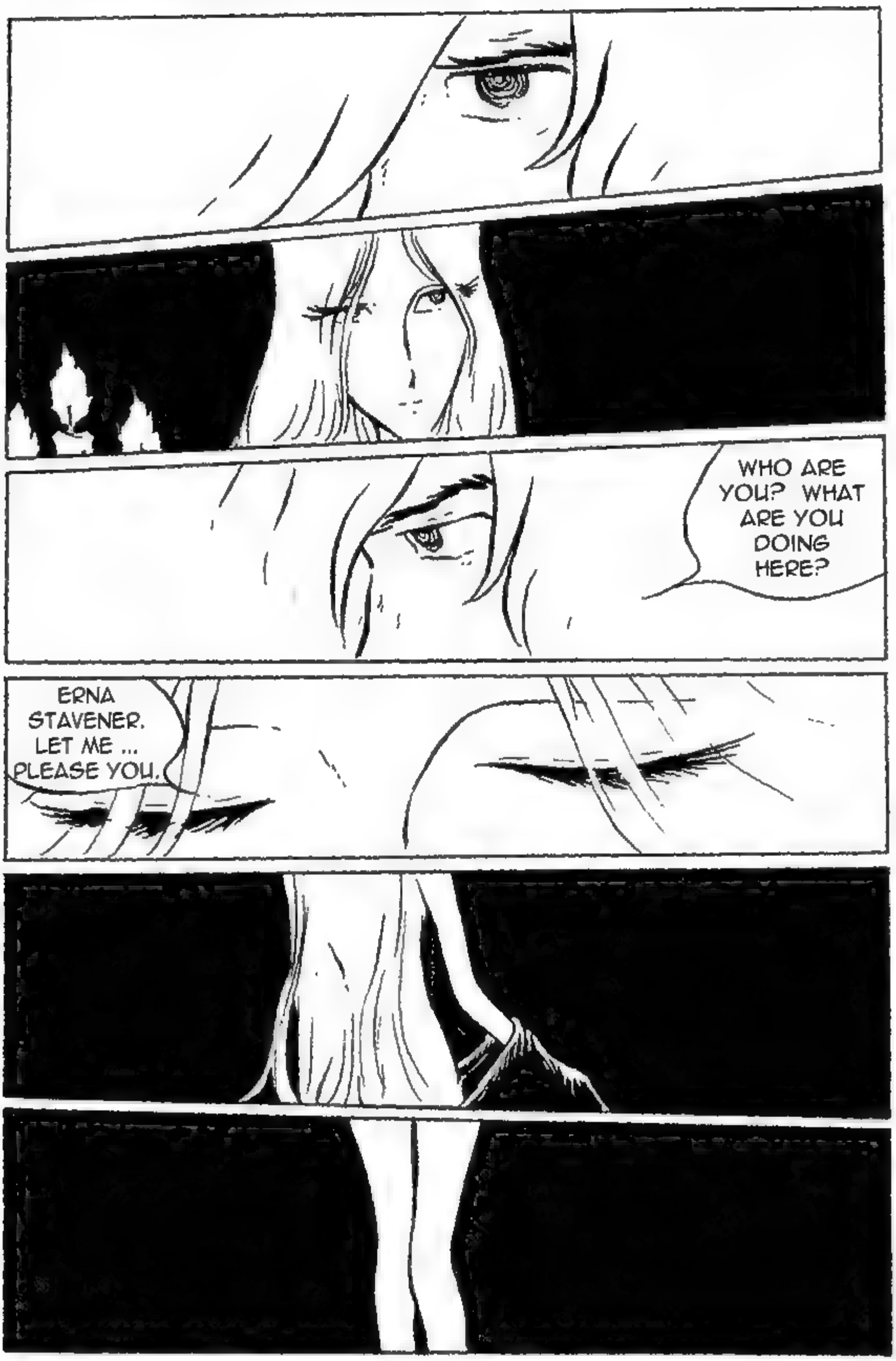
(*) *VOLKSJAGER* - DE. "THE PEOPLE'S FIGHTER," THE OFFICIAL NAME GIVEN BY THE REICH GOVERNMENT TO THE HEINKEL HE-163 JET FIGHTER.

YOU KNOW, THE LOCALS SAY THIS CASTLE IS HAUNTED.
BAH! ALL CASTLES ARE HAUNTED, BUT I HAVEN'T SEEN ANY GHOSTS YET.


I INTEND TO. THE REST OF YOU DO THE SAME.
GOOD NIGHT, SIR. SLEEP WELL.
THIS BEDROOM IS HUGE. TOO BIG FOR MY TASTES, BUT THIS IS THE WAY THESE PLACES WERE MADE BACK IN THE DAY.
?

SENTRIES! HAS THERE BEEN ANYONE OUT HERE?
NEIN, STAFFEL-KAPITAN!* NO UN-AUTHORIZED PERSONS!
BUT I SAW THE DOOR ... MUST BE MY IMAGINATION.
I DIDN'T "GET PAST" THEM, I WAS ALLOWED.
HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE PAST THE SENTRIES!
!!

(*) "NEIN, STAFFELKAPITAN!" = "NO, SQUADRON COMMANDER!"


WHO ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
ERNA STAVENER. LET ME ... PLEASE YOU.

ERNA ... THAT'S NOT A LOCAL NAME.

TRANSYLVANIA USUALLY GETS ASSOCIATED WITH ANOTHER NAME.

AND YOU'RE A GERMAN. THAT'S NOT LOCAL EITHER.

WELL, IF YOU WERE A VAMPIRE THEN YOU WOULD HAVE ALREADY DONE ME IN. SO MUCH FOR THAT.

DRACULA.

OH? WELL THIS ISN'T THE USUAL PILLOW TALK, BUT GIVEN THIS PLACE I'M GAME.

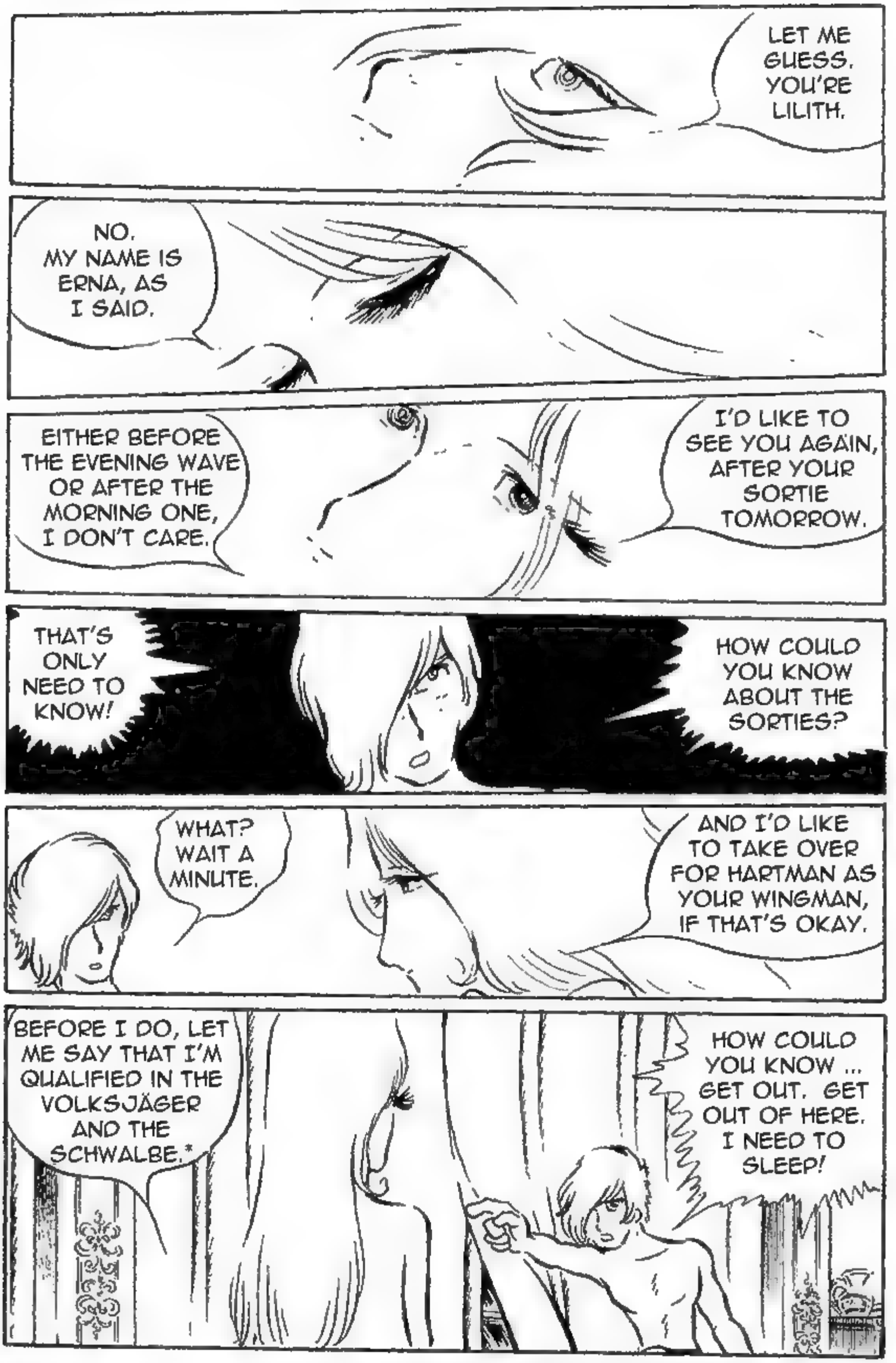
THERE'S OTHER LEGENDS OF MONSTERS AND SUPERNATURAL THINGS.

EACH ONE IS A GREAT DEMON LORD SENT STRAIGHT UP FROM HELL.

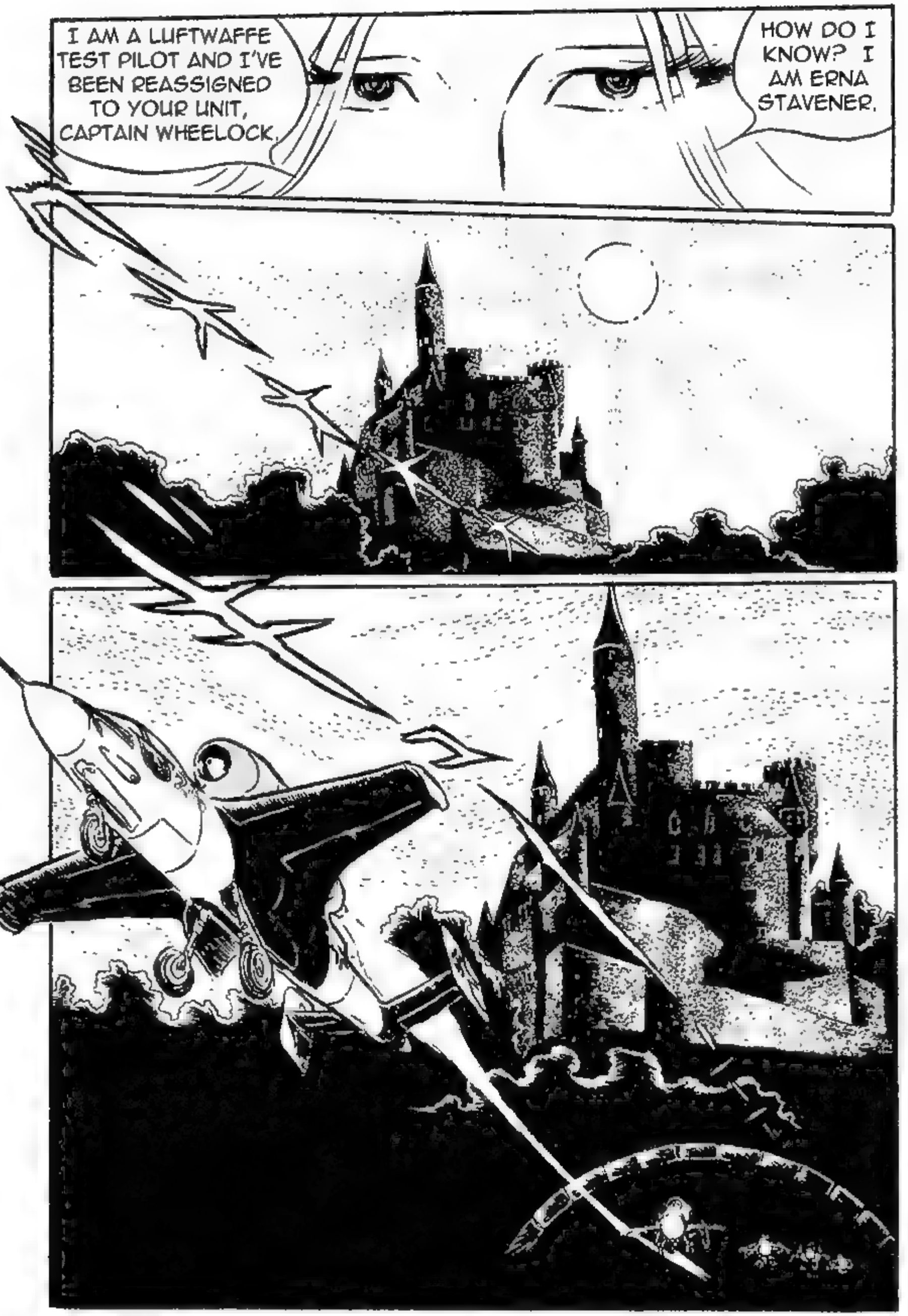
SEVEN? WHY SEVEN?

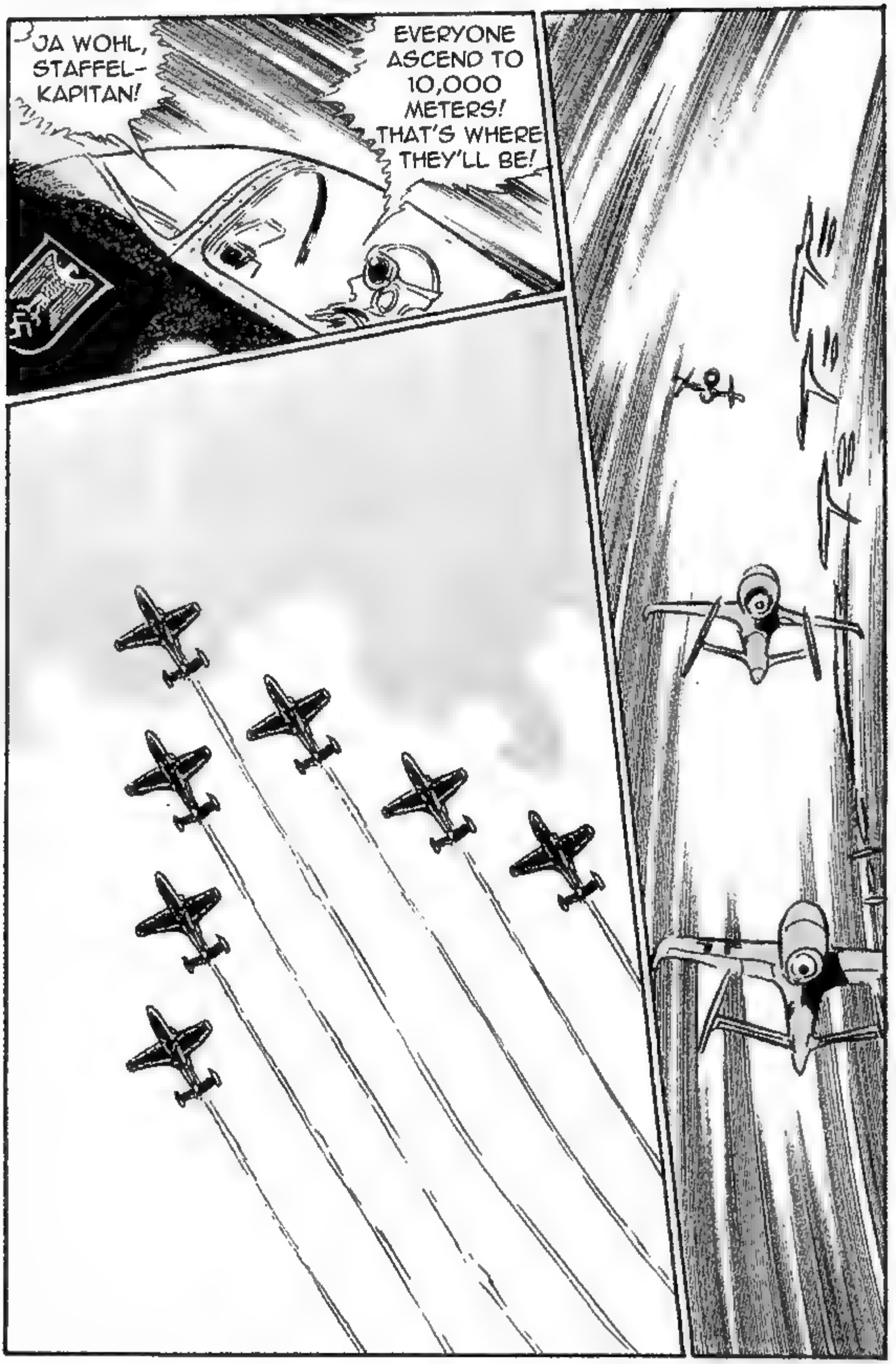
THERE'S ALSO THE TALE OF THE SEVEN KNIGHTS OF THE DEMON LEGEND.

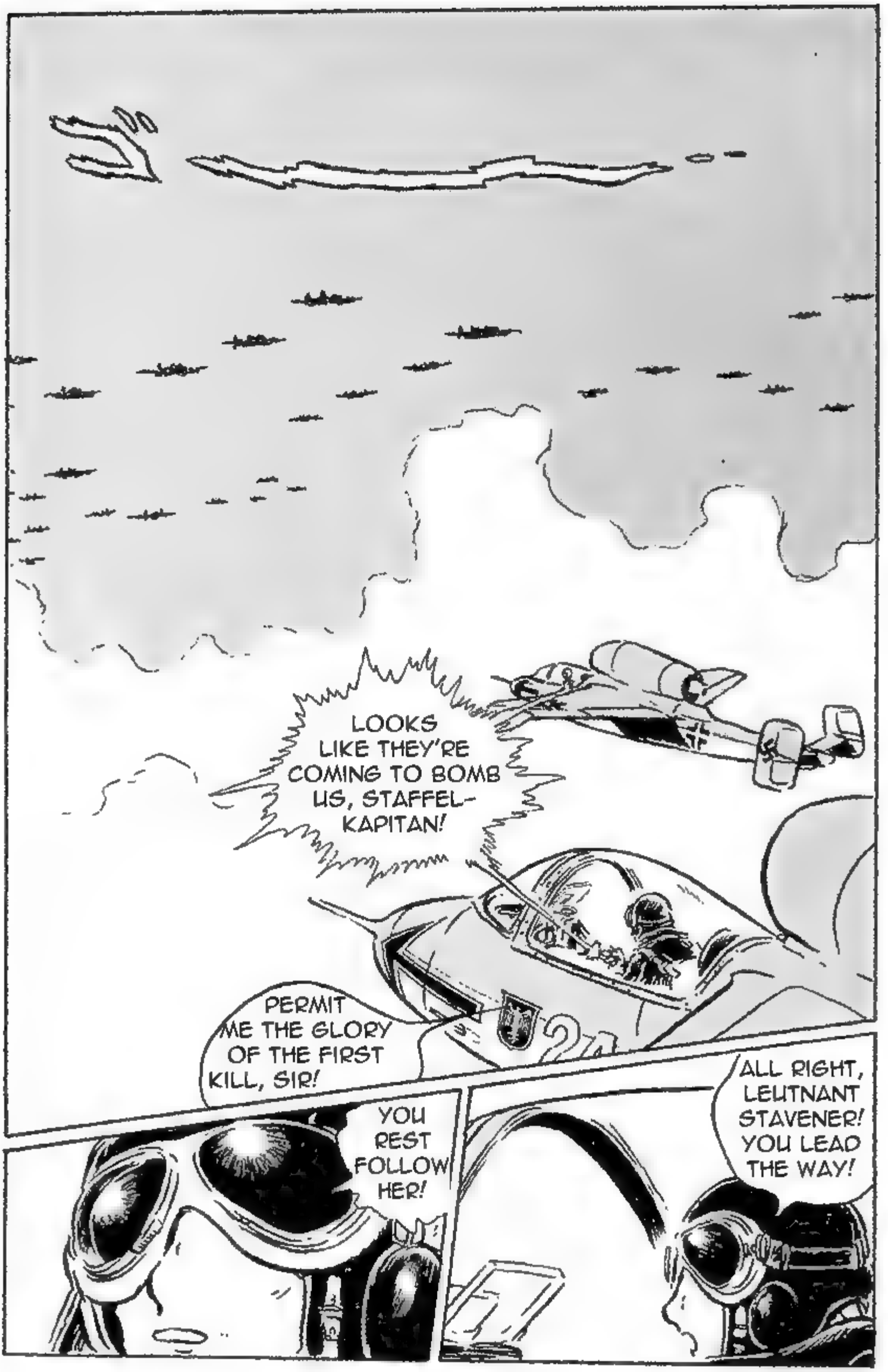
SO WHAT DO THESE SEVEN GREAT DEMON LORDS DO?
THEY SOAR UP INTO THE SKY AT NIGHT FROM BELOW TO DO BATTLE WITH ALL WHO WOULD STAND AGAINST THE FORCES OF HELL.
SATAN HIMSELF ENCOURAGES THEIR ACTIONS. THEY ARE VERY CRUEL, AND NEVER RETURN UNLESS THEY HAVE DONE SOME TERRIBLE DEED.
SOMETIMES EVEN LILITH HERSELF, SATAN'S CONSORT, WILL WELCOME THEM BACK.


LET ME GUESS. YOU'RE LILITH.
NO. MY NAME IS ERNA, AS I SAID.
I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU AGAIN, AFTER YOUR SORTIE TOMORROW.
EITHER BEFORE THE EVENING WAVE OR AFTER THE MORNING ONE, I DON'T CARE.
HOW COULD YOU KNOW ABOUT THE SORTIES?
THAT'S ONLY NEED TO KNOW!
AND I'D LIKE TO TAKE OVER FOR HARTMAN AS YOUR WINGMAN, IF THAT'S OKAY.
WHAT? WAIT A MINUTE.
HOW COULD YOU KNOW ... GET OUT. GET OUT OF HERE. I NEED TO SLEEP!
BEFORE I DO, LET ME SAY THAT I'M QUALIFIED IN THE VOLKSJÄGER AND THE SCHWALBE.*

(*) *SCHWALBE* – THE OFFICIAL LUFTWAFFE NICKNAME FOR THE MESSERSCHMITT ME-262, THE WORLD'S FIRST OPERATIONAL JET FIGHTER.


I AM A LUFTWAFFE TEST PILOT AND I'VE BEEN REASSIGNED TO YOUR UNIT, CAPTAIN WHEELOCK.
HOW DO I KNOW? I AM ERNA STAVENER.


JA WOHL, STAFFEL-KAPITAN!
EVERYONE ASCEND TO 10,000 METERS! THAT'S WHERE THEY'LL BE!


LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE COMING TO BOMB US, STAFFEL-KAPITAN!
PERMIT ME THE GLORY OF THE FIRST KILL, SIR!
YOU REST FOLLOW HER!
ALL RIGHT, LEUTNANT STAVENER! YOU LEAD THE WAY!

13
DROP AS MANY AS YOU CAN! SIEG HEIL!
HA-HA-HA-HA-HAH ....
ERNA STAVENER ... KNOWN AS "THE WITCH OF THE LUFTWAFFE" TO HER FELLOW PILOTS..
IT WAS SHE WHO LED THE SEVEN DEMON KNIGHTS ON THAT DAY.

NONE WHO WERE THERE CAN FORGET THE BOMBING OF THAT OLD CASTLE BY THE BRITISH ON THAT DAY.
THE BRITISH WILL NEVER FORGET IT EITHER, BECAUSE SEVEN DEMON-LIKE PLANES DESTROYED MOST OF THEIR BOMBERS BEFORE THEY DISAPPEARED.
WHERE THEY WENT, NONE CAN SAY.
DAS ENDE

(Published in Big Comic Original, April 5, 1978 issue)

LEIJI
MATSUMOTO
PRESENTS

THE COCKPIT

THE GERMAN RECON PLANE IS DRIFTING SLIGHTLY TO THE RIGHT OF ITS APPARENTLY PLANNED COURSE DUE TO STRONG HIGH ALTITUDE WINDS.

I'D SAY IT'S A MESSERSCHMITT ME-410.

NOW WATCH WHILE SIR WINDSOR DOES HIS USUAL HIGH SPEED, HEAD-ON ATTACK. HE'S QUITE GOOD AT IT!

THE TWIN ENGINED KNIGHT

AS I SAID, SIR WINDSOR IS QUITE IMPRESSIVE, ISN'T HE?

HE GOT IT ON THE FIRST PASS!

THIS IS GROUP CAPTAIN WINDSOR. TARGET ELIMINTATED IN A SINGLE ATTACK. I AM RETURNING TO BASE, OVER.

ALL THAT'S LEFT IS A BURNING OIL SLICK ON THE OCEAN.

I'LL BET THEY CAN SEE IT FROM DOVER.

HA!

LATER ...

THIS IS A SOLID GOLD ENGAGEMENT RING. WILL YOU MARRY ME, ELIZABETH?

YES?

WINDSOR?

MOSQUITOS ARE FASTER THAN MOST GERMAN PLANES.

WHY MUST YOU ALWAYS ATTACK HEAD-ON?

YOU COULD SHOOT THEM DOWN ANY WAY AND FROM ANY WHERE YOU WANT. WHY HEAD ON, LOVE?

I'VE BEEN TOLD BY OTHER PILOTS THAT'S THE MOST DANGEROUS KIND OF AIR ATTACK TO MAKE.

IT TAKES A REAL WARRIOR WITH REAL SKILL TO ATTACK HEAD-ON. THAT'S WHY I DO IT, BETH. IT'S WHO I AM.

THAT'S WHAT A KNIGHT DOES.

MY ANCESTORS WERE PROUD OF THAT.
EVER SINCE OLDEN TIMES KNIGHTS HAVE ALWAYS GONE HEAD-ON INTO BATTLE.
TIMES AND TECHNOLOGY MAY CHANGE, BUT A MAN'S PRIDE DOESN'T.
AND WHILE YOU MAY NOT BE OF THE BLOOD ROYAL, THERE IS THAT FAMILY NAME OF YOURS TO CONSIDER.
I WOULD RATHER DIE AS A MAN IN BATTLE THAN FAIL AS A COWARD.
THAT'S WHY I FIGHT THE WAY I DO, BETH.
THERE'S SIMPLY NO OTHER WAY I CAN FIGHT.

CAN YOU SEE ME ON ONE KNEE, BETH?

THAT'S WHY YOU FACED ME TO PROPOSE.

NO ... NOR WOULD I WANT YOU TO BE, LOVE.

I LOVE YOU, AND I'LL BE BOTH HAPPY AND PROUD TO BE MARRIED TO A GALLANT KNIGHT LIKE YOU.

THAT'S WHY I'M GOING TO SAY "YES."

THAT YOU'LL LOVE ME UNTIL YOU DIE.

THANK YOU, LOVE. WHAT CAN I SAY?

THAT COULD HAPPEN, YOU KNOW. THEY HAVE KNIGHTS TOO.

AND SHOW THE KNIGHTS OF GERMANY HOW A TRUE SON OF BRITAIN FIGHTS!

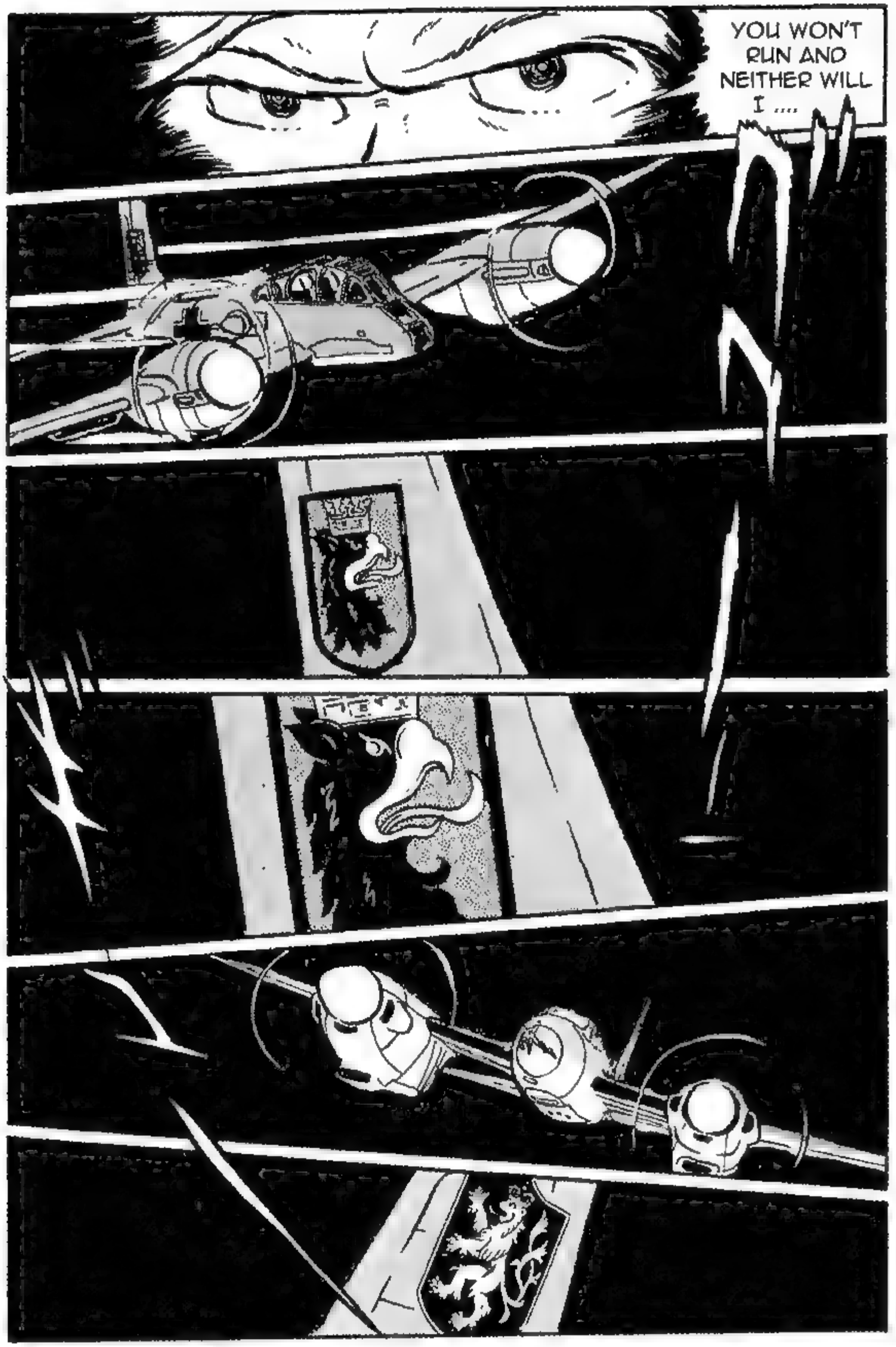
BUT I'LL FACE THEM ...

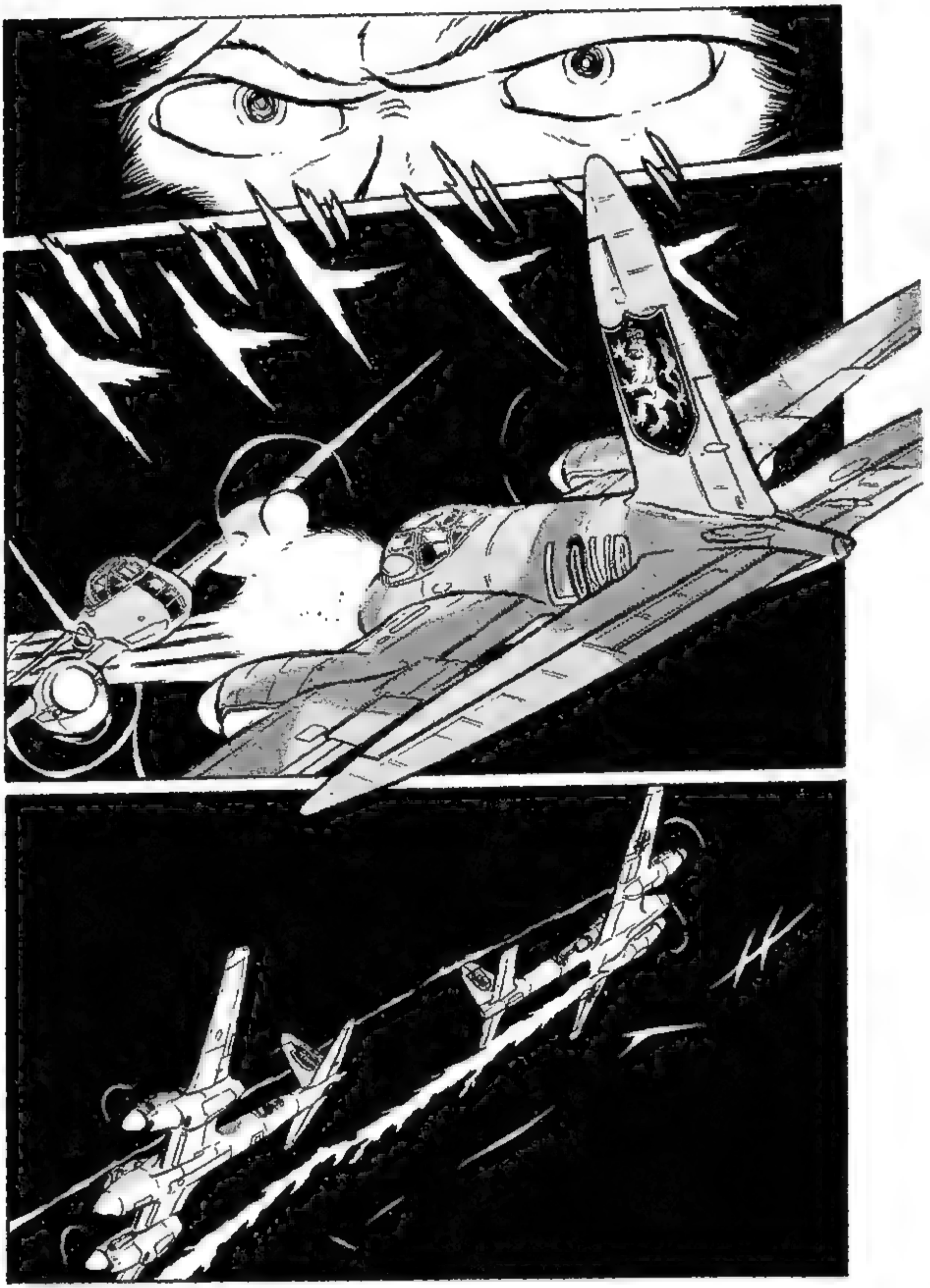
UNDOUBTEDLY. AND WHEN ONE COMES, I'LL FACE HIM.
ARE THERE ANY STILL OUT THERE?
WE'LL FIGHT MAN TO MAN, KNIGHT AGAINST KNIGHT.
WE WILL DUEL IN THE SKIES ON OUR MODERN STEEDS WIELDING OUR IRON LANCES FULL OF LEAD, AND WE'LL SEE WHO IS THE BETTER.
JUST LIKE IN THE DAYS OF OLD, ALTHOUGH IN A MODERN WAY.
SO YOU REALLY THINK THEY'LL SEND A KNIGHT AGAINST YOU SOMEDAY?
THAT MIGHT SOUND ROMANTIC BUT I KNOW THE DEADLINESS OF THOSE WORDS.
... AND I WILL MEET HIS CHALLENGE AS ONLY A KNIGHT CAN!
I'M SURE OF IT, LOVE ...
WAIT AND SEE!

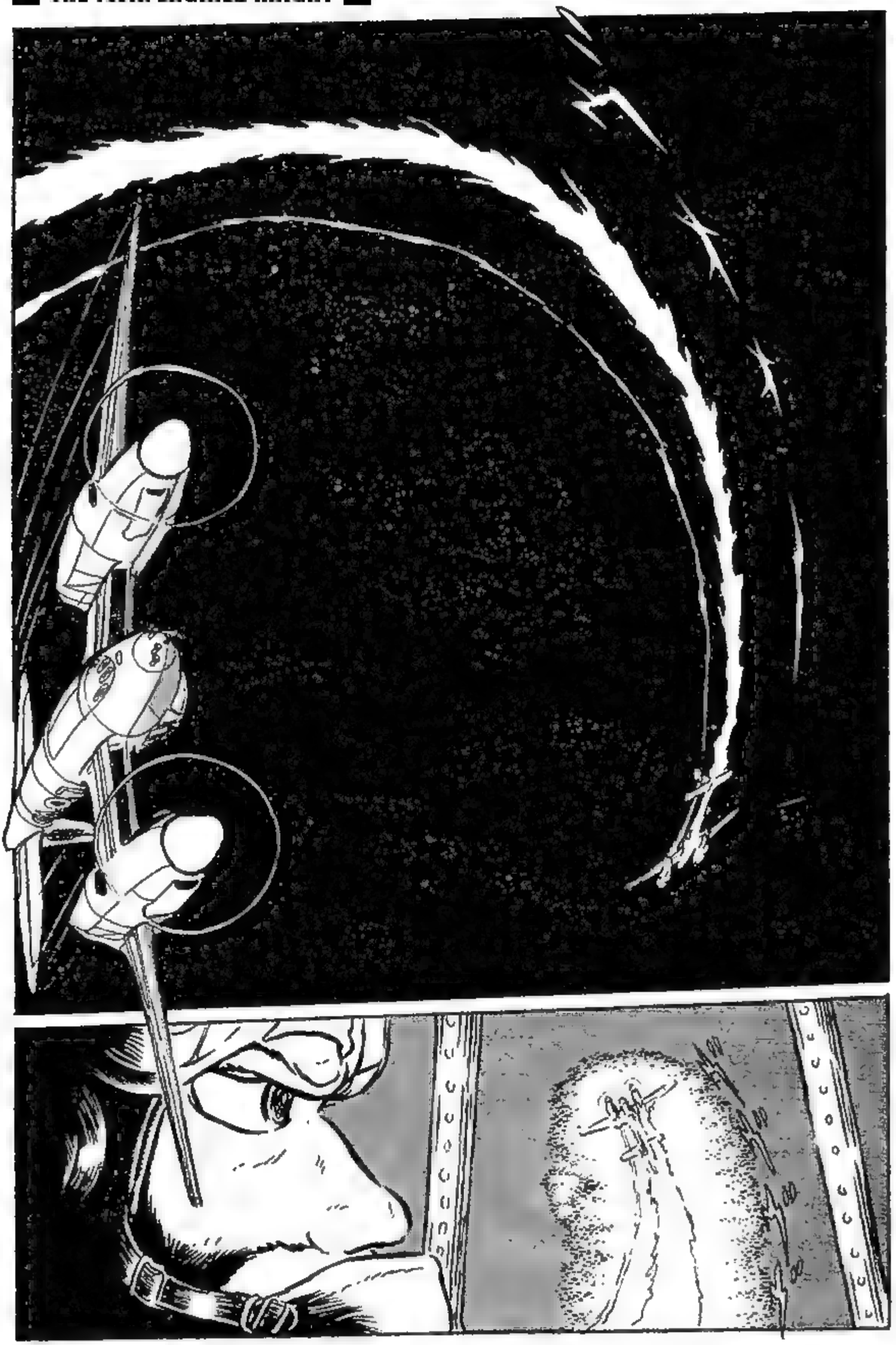
SOME DAYS LATER, AFTER SIR WINDSOR'S MARRIAGE ....

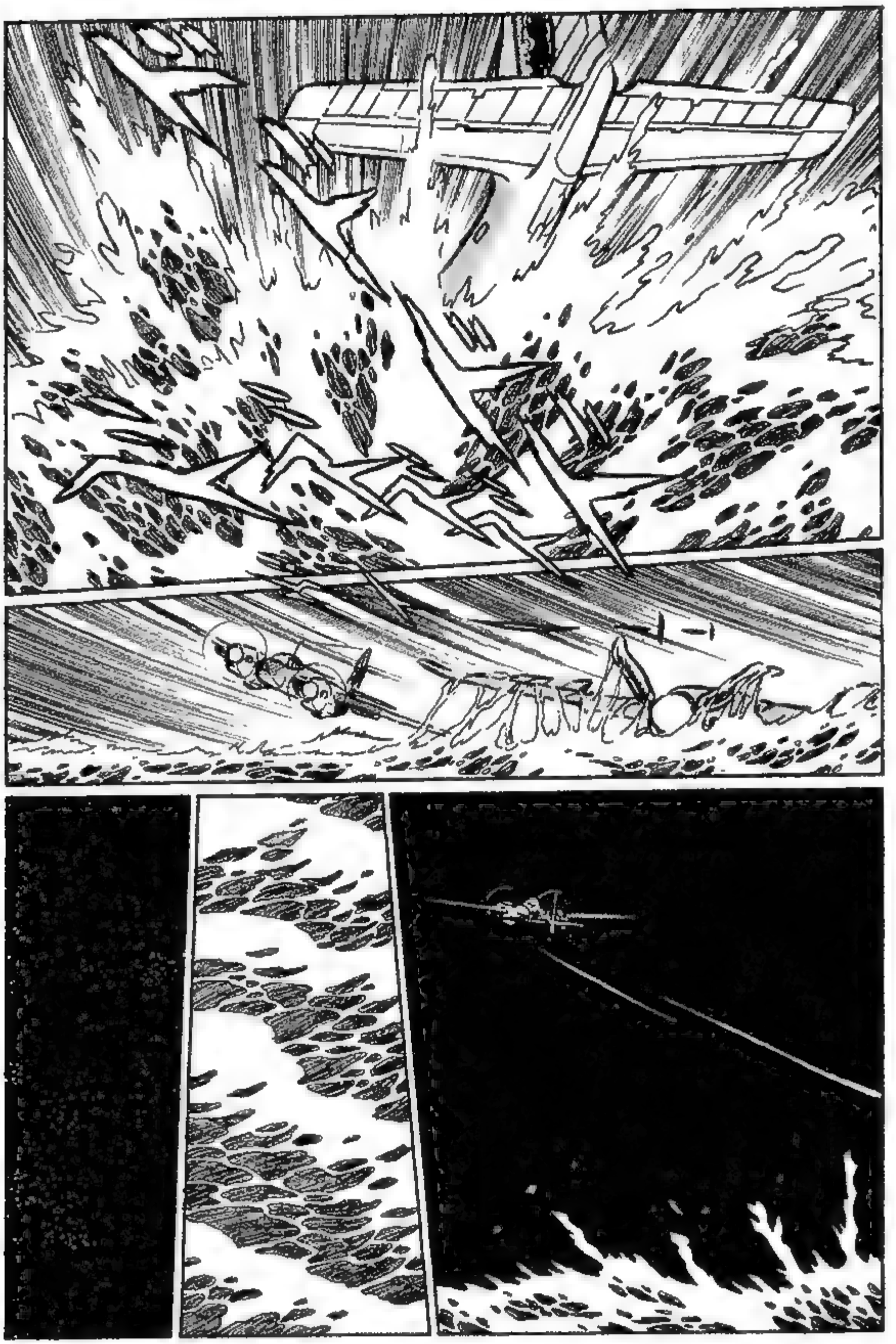
IT'S A GERMAN RECON PLANE ON APPROACH, SIR. JUST PASSING THE THIRD OBSERVATION POINT.
WINDSOR'S GOING AFTER HIM, POOR GERMAN.
ANOTHER HEAD-ON ATTACK, SAME AS ALWAYS. HE'S EITHER A CRAZY OR BRAVE MAN ....

HE'S TOO FAST FOR ME! DAMN ENGINES!
YOU DUCKED MY FIRST BLOW? HM! YOU'RE GOOD!
STILL I MUST DO MY BEST!


YOU WON'T RUN AND NEITHER WILL I ....







RESCUE HIM IF YOU CAN! I WANT TO SEE THAT PILOT'S FACE! HE'S THE FIRST TO ESCAPE MY FIRST PASS!

HE CRASH LANDED IN THE CHANNEL! SEARCH BOAT SENT, SIR!

ROGER THAT!

LATER ...

THIS ONE WAS DIFFERENT, BETH. HE DIDN'T TRY TO BREAK. HE CAME HEAD ON AT ME, JUST LIKE I'VE DONE TO OTHERS. PERHAPS ....

... PERHAPS HE'S THE GERMAN KNIGHT I'VE BEEN SEEKING TO FIGHT.

AWWW. TOO BAD.

ONLY I WON'T FIGHT YOU.

I'M GLAD YOU FOUND HIM. NOW WILL YOU MAKE LADY WINDSOR HAPPY TOO?

I'M SO GLAD OUR GOD ABOVE HAS SEEN FIT TO SAVE YOU FOR ME EACH AND EVERY NIGHT SO FAR, MY LORD.

WINDSOR. THEY DID? I SEE. THANKS.

A GERMAN SUB PICKED UP OUR FRIEND BEFORE OUR SEARCH BOAT WAS ABLE TO.

THAT'S AUDACIOUS. I THOUGHT THE ROYAL NAVY WAS BETTER THAN THAT.

WHISKED HIM RIGHT OUT FROM UNDER THEM NEAR DOVER.

THEN AGAIN, THEY'RE A BIT FUDDY-DUDDY THESE DAYS.

SOMETIMES EVEN THE ROYAL NAVY HAS BAD NIGHTS.

THE AMERICANS, THE JAPANESE, EVEN THE REICH KRIEGSMARINE AS SMALL AS IT IS. THEY PLAY CATCH-UP TO THEM NOW.

OTHERS HAVE PULLED AHEAD OF THEM IN SO MANY WAYS.

BUT WITH AGE COMES LOTS OF EXPERIENCE, AND WE HAVE THAT IN SPADES. SAME GOES FOR ME.

SAME HERE.

I'M SO GLAD YOU WEREN'T INJURED, COLONEL VON MEINSTEIN!

OH? REALLY ...

THEY'RE HAPPY YOU MADE IT TOO.

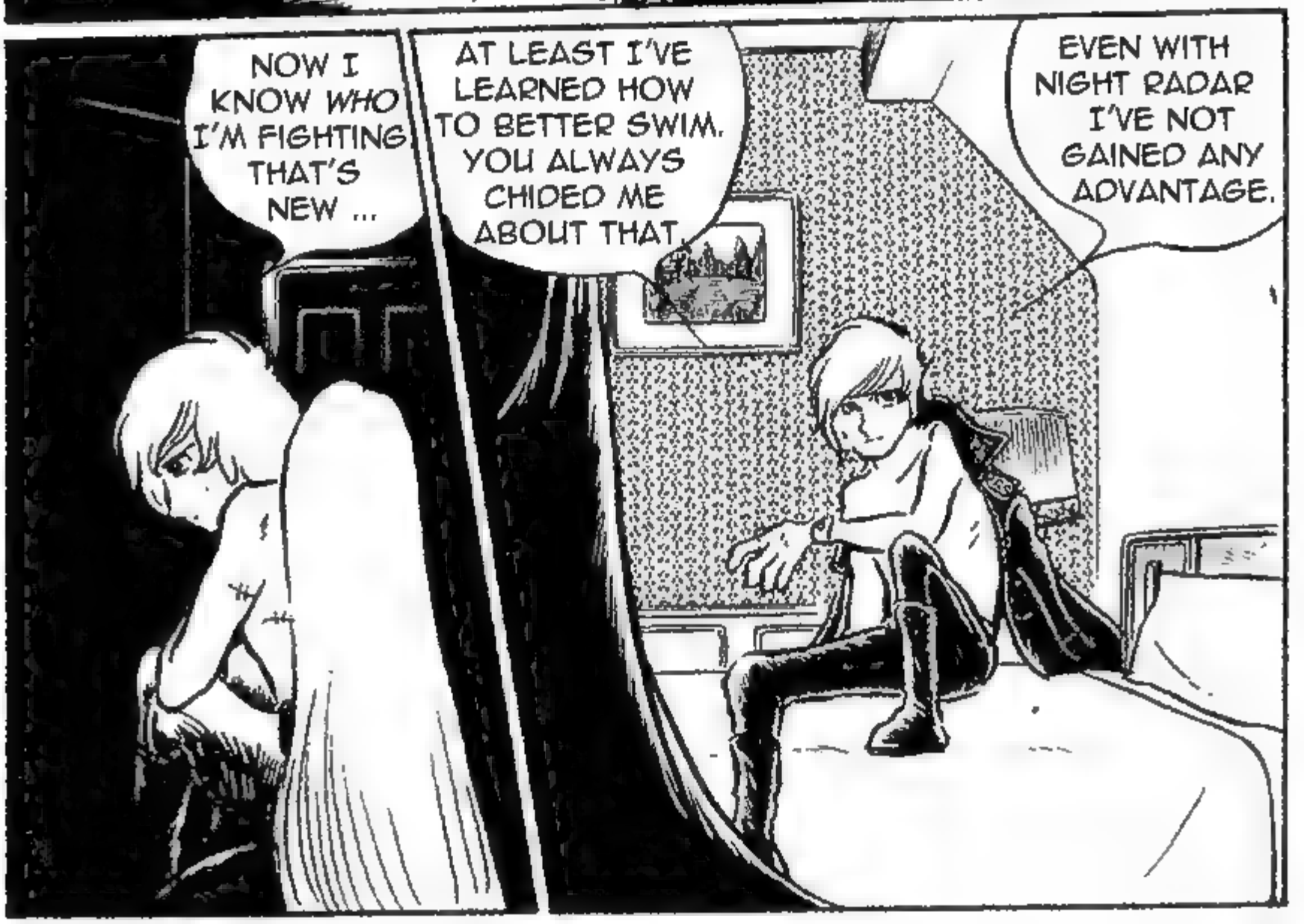
THAT'S GOOD. IT SEEMS BOTH THE BRITISHER AND I HAVE FOUND THE SAME THING: A WORTHY OPPONENT.

... IN AN GOOD OLD BATTLE OF KNIGHTS, BUT DONE MODERN STYLE!

THIS IS ONLY THE FIRST CLASH, MY FRIEND ...

THAT'S NOT THE POINT.
SO HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU BEEN SHOT DOWN ON A RECON FLIGHT?
NOW I *KNOW* WHO'S BEEN DOING THAT SHOOTING, JUST HOW GOOD HE IS, AND WHY.

I'VE BEEN HANDICAPPED EVERY TIME I'VE TRIED TO FIGHT HIM.
UNFORTUNATELY NONE OF OUR PLANES CAN MATCH THE SPEED AND AGILITY OF THE MOSQUITO.


NOW I KNOW *WHO* I'M FIGHTING THAT'S NEW ...
AT LEAST I'VE LEARNED HOW TO BETTER SWIM. YOU ALWAYS CHIDED ME ABOUT THAT.
EVEN WITH NIGHT RADAR I'VE NOT GAINED ANY ADVANTAGE.

... BECAUSE HE IS A KNIGHT LIKE ME. A REAL OPPONENT OF THE OLD SCHOOL TO FIGHT.

SIR WINDSOR PREFERS THE FRONTAL ATTACK ...

AND WITH MY WEAKER ENGINES THERE'S NO WAY TO GET AROUND HIM.

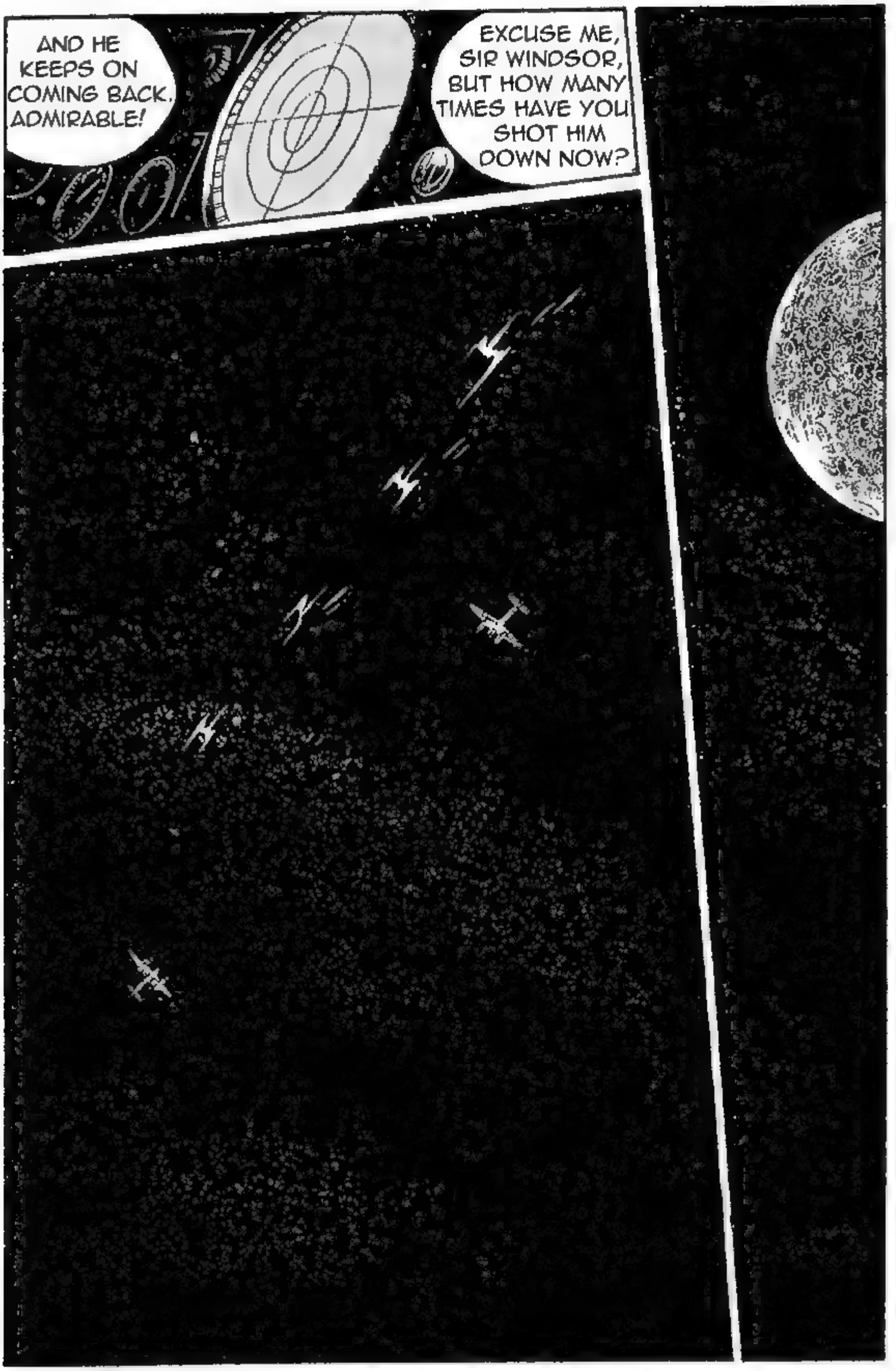
IF I'M TO TAKE WINDSOR OUT, I'VE GOT TO DO IT HIS WAY: A HEAD-ON ATTACK.

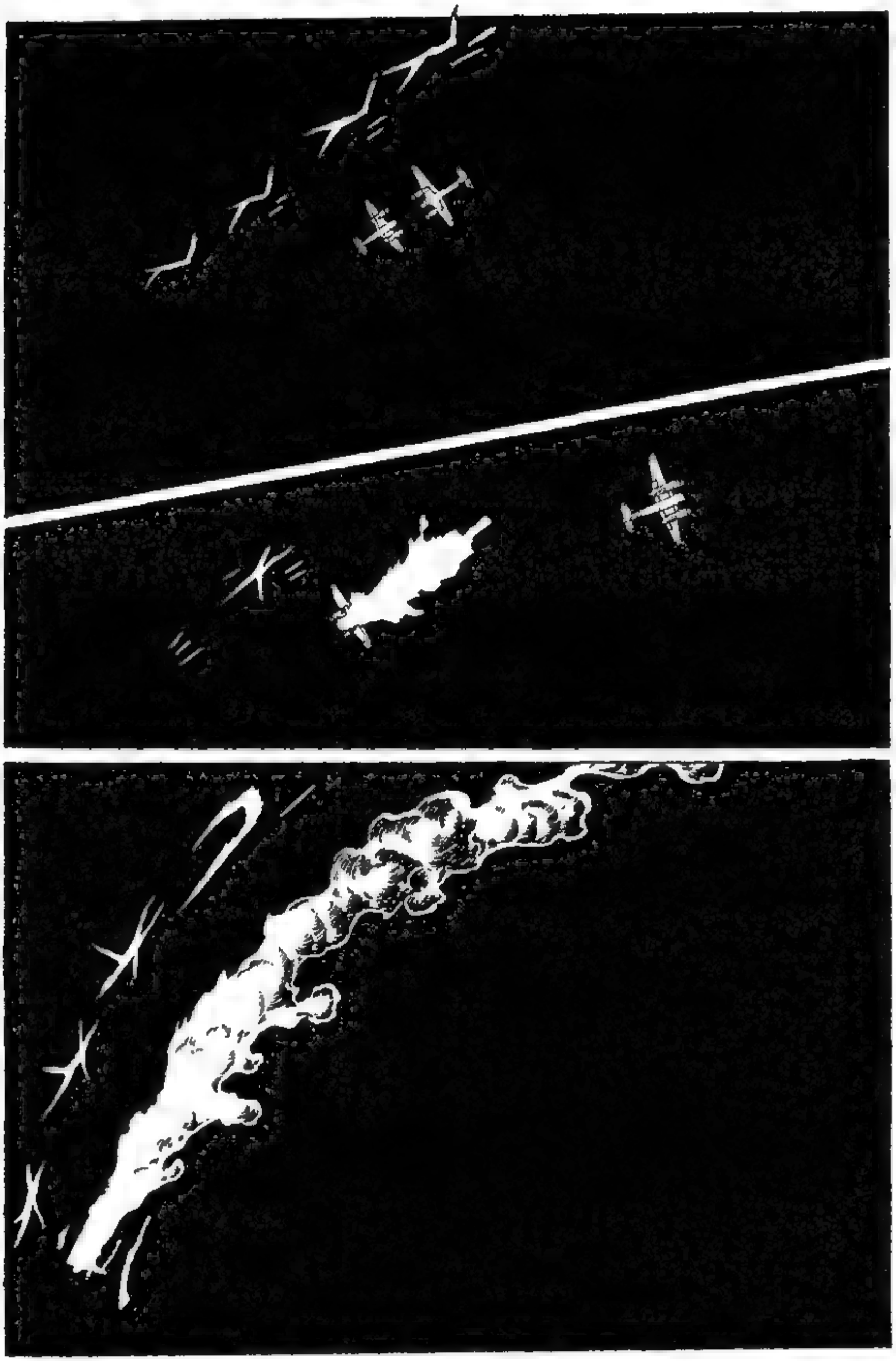
I CAN'T LET THIS BRITISHER KEEP SHOOTING ME DOWN. I'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY TO EVEN OR BETTER THE ODDS AGAINST HIM.

IT'S WHAT MY ANCESTORS WOULD HAVE DONE, BACK WHEN WE STILL ARMORED UP TO FIGHT.

OH, ERNST ...

ONLY THEN CAN I BEAT HIM, AND ONLY THEN CAN WE VON MEINSTEINS HOLD OUR HEADS HIGH.


AND HE KEEPS ON COMING BACK. ADMIRABLE!
EXCUSE ME, SIR WINDSOR, BUT HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU SHOT HIM DOWN NOW?



I DON'T UNDERSTAND, ARCHIE. WHY DOES HE KEEP COMING BACK?

YOU GET HIM EVERY TIME.

... AND A TRUE KNIGHT NEVER GIVES UP WHILE HE STILL HAS BREATH LEFT TO FIGHT!

BECAUSE HE MUST, BETH. HE'S A KNIGHT LIKE ME ...

A BRITISH KNIGHT ...

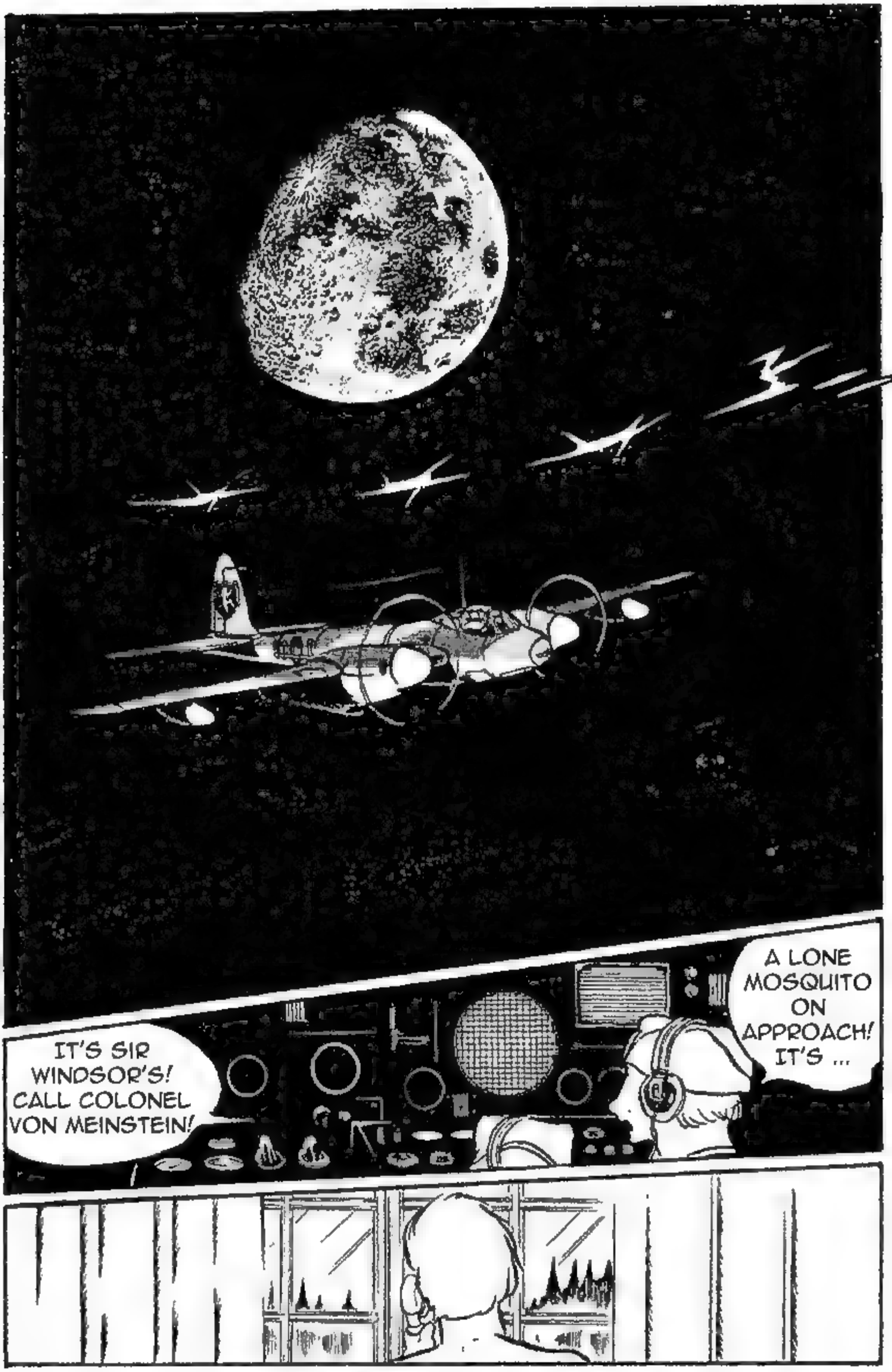
... FIGHTING A GERMAN KNIGHT IN OUR MODERN STEEL STEEDS IN THE SKY. WHO'S GOING TO WIN IN THE END?

PERHAPS ONLY GOD KNOWS THE ANSWER.

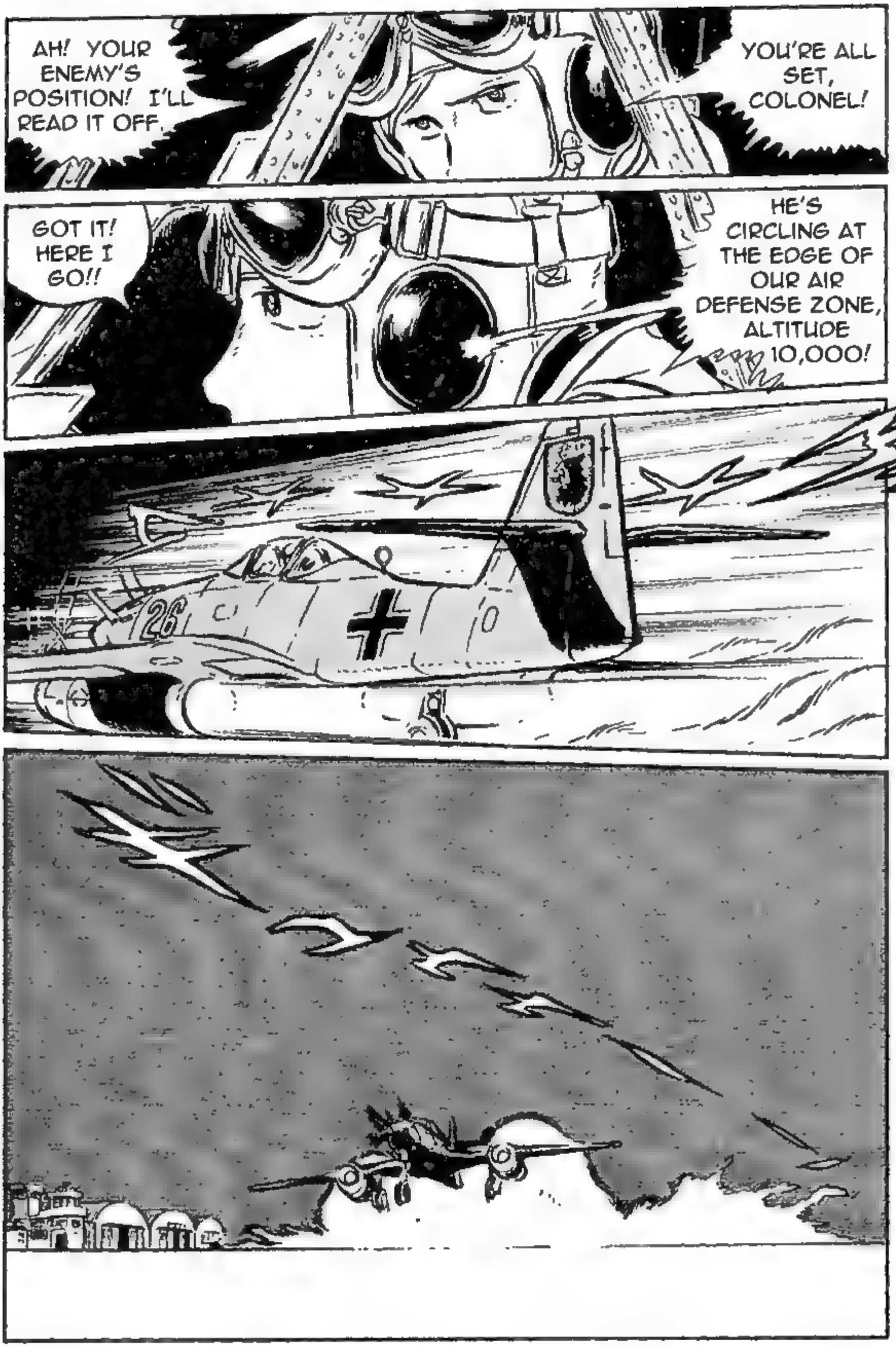
I'M GOING ON A LITTLE TRIP ... ... TO *BERLIN!*

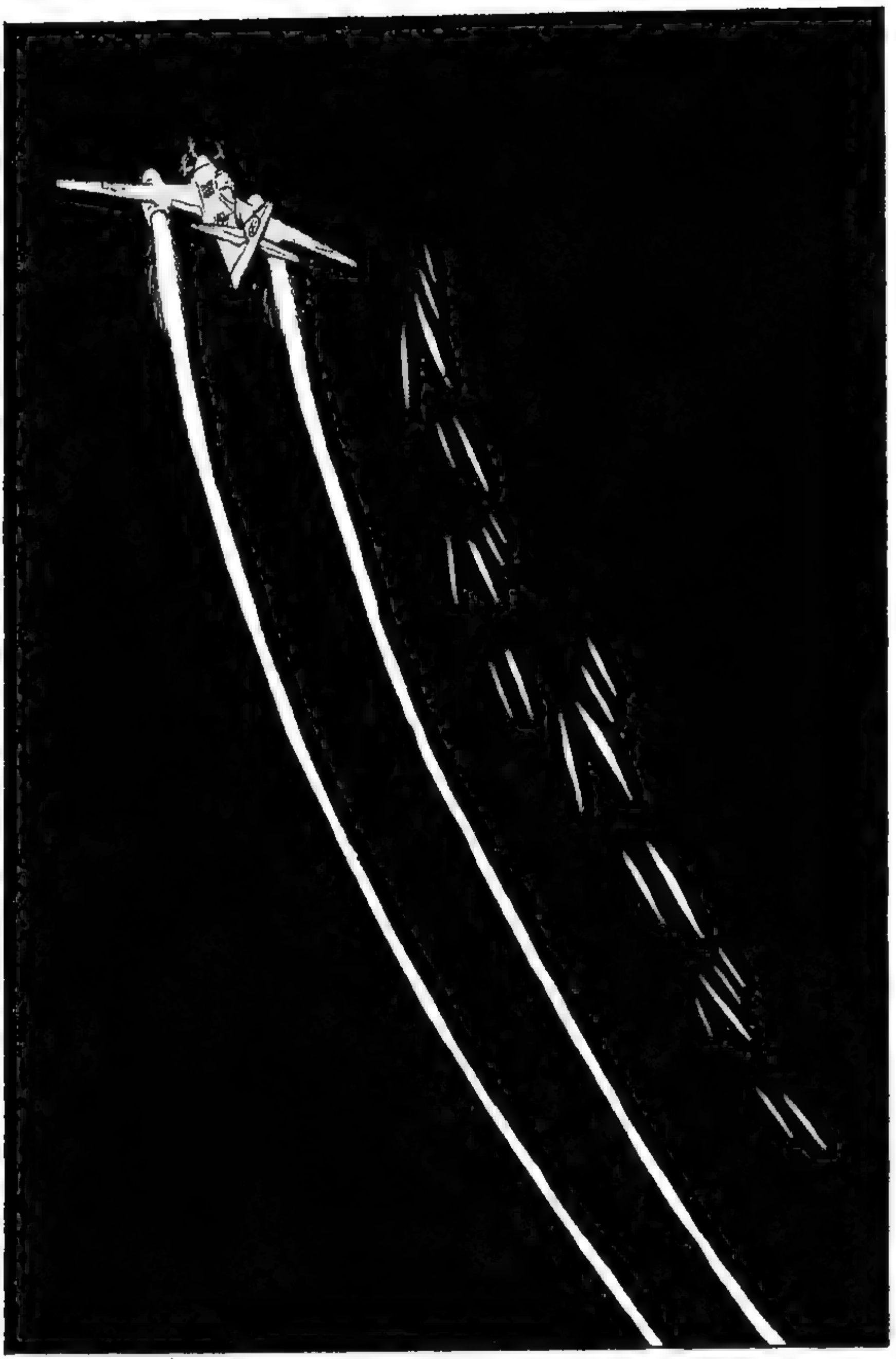
BETH, I'VE RECEIVED NEW ORDERS.

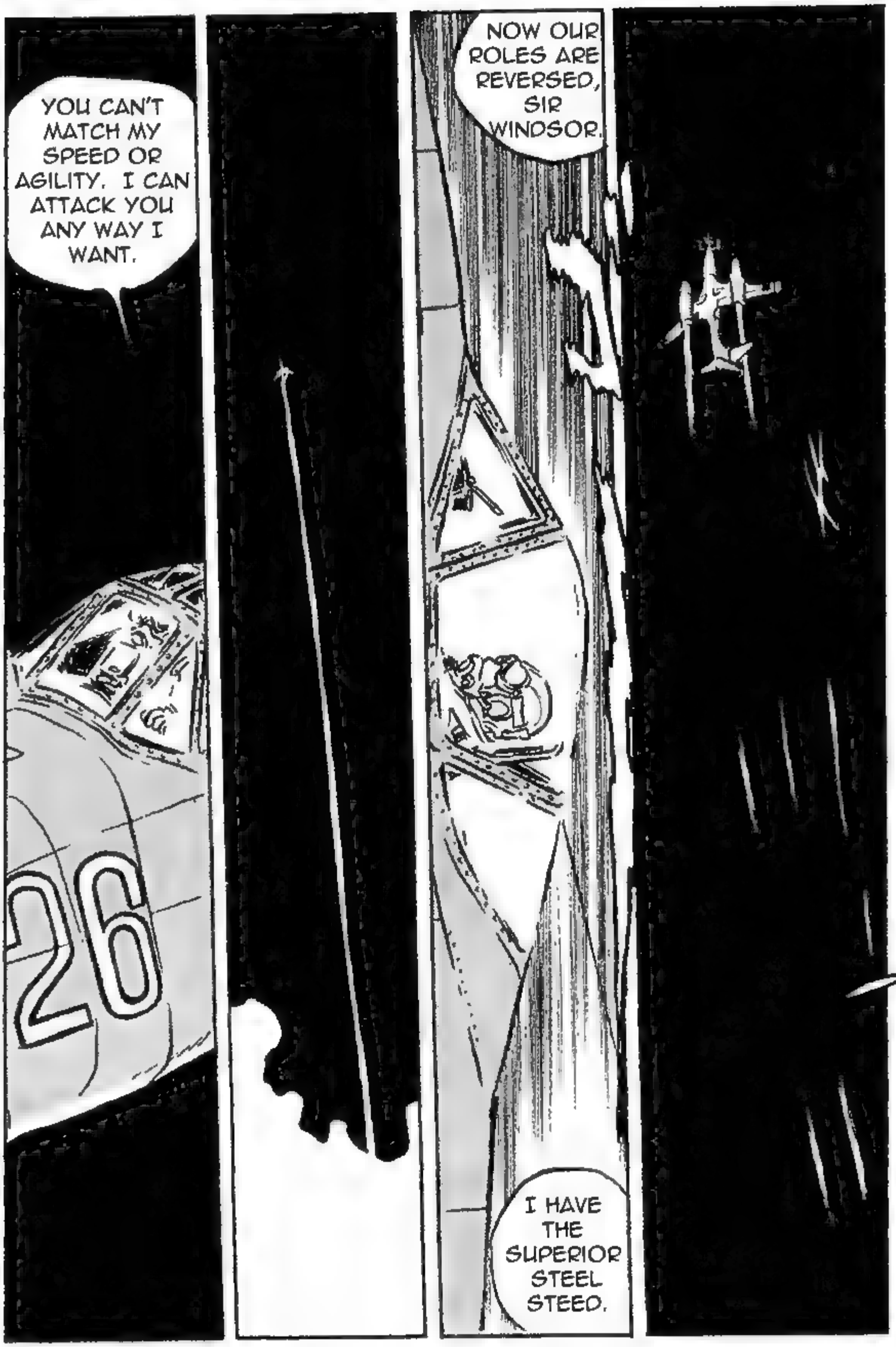
A FEW DAYS LATER ....

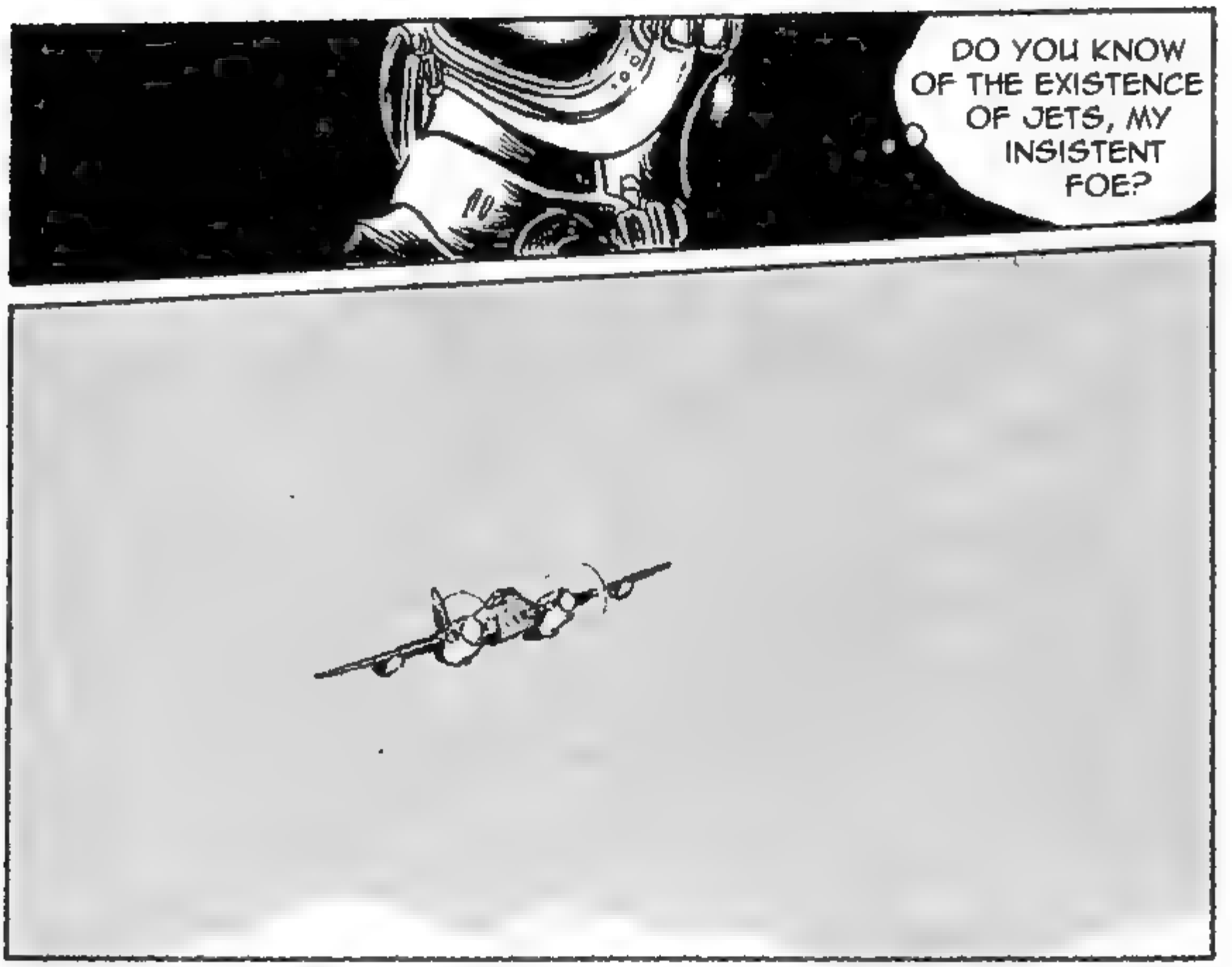

A LONE MOSQUITO ON APPROACH! IT'S ...
IT'S SIR WINDSOR'S! CALL COLONEL VON MEINSTEIN!

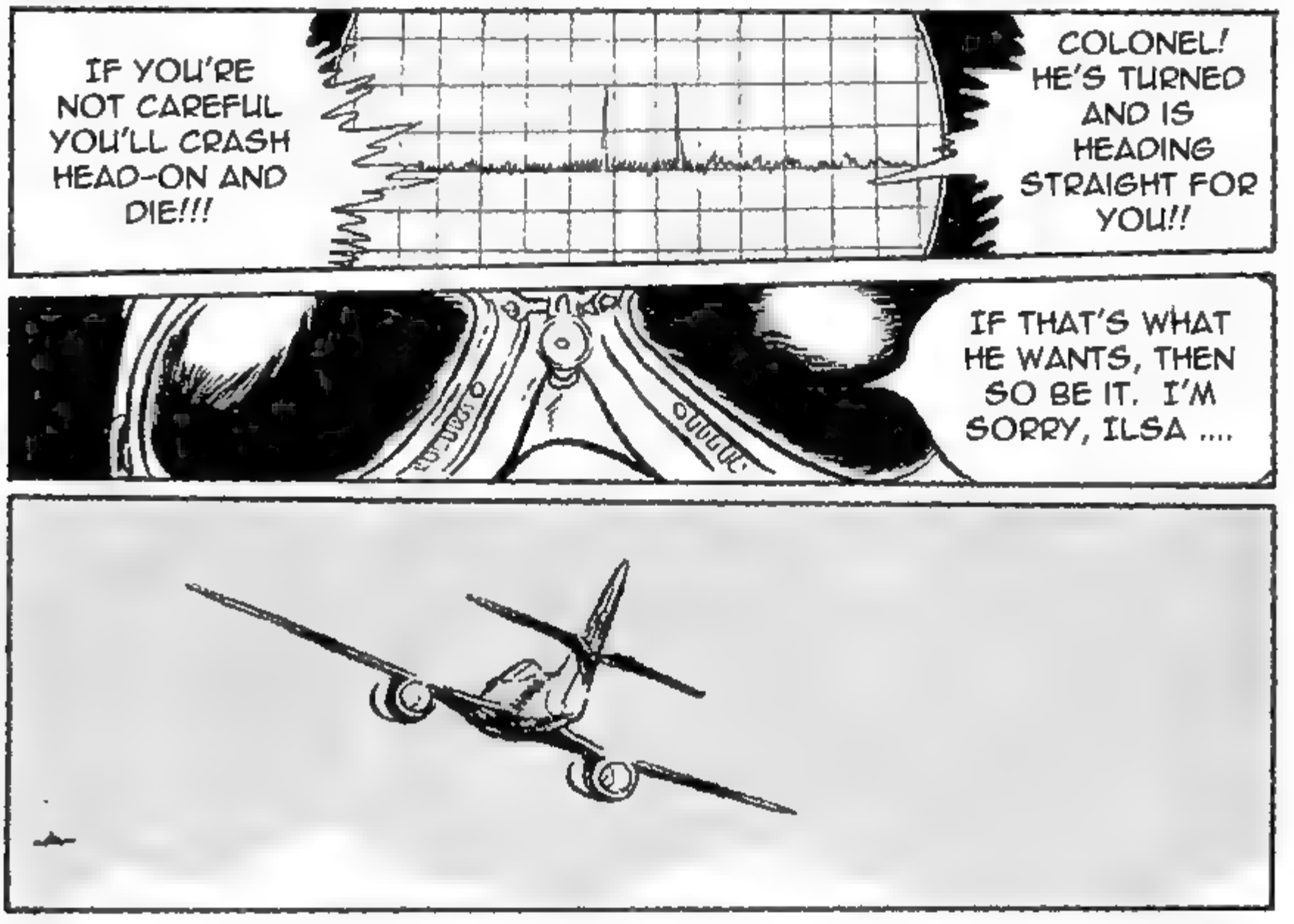
PLEASE DON'T CRY, ILSA. I'M DOING MY JOB ...
... BUT THIS IS ALSO A CHALLENGE FROM *HIM*. I HAVE TO ACCEPT.
ANYWAY I'LL BE BACK, ILSA. I PROMISE.
DO YOUR BEST, AND NO MATTER WHAT REMEMBER I LOVE YOU.
SO YOU'VE ALWAYS SAID, ERNST. MANY TIMES.
I DON'T KNOW HOW I KNOW IT BUT I DO. OH, ERNST ... !
HE'S NOT COMING BACK THIS TIME.

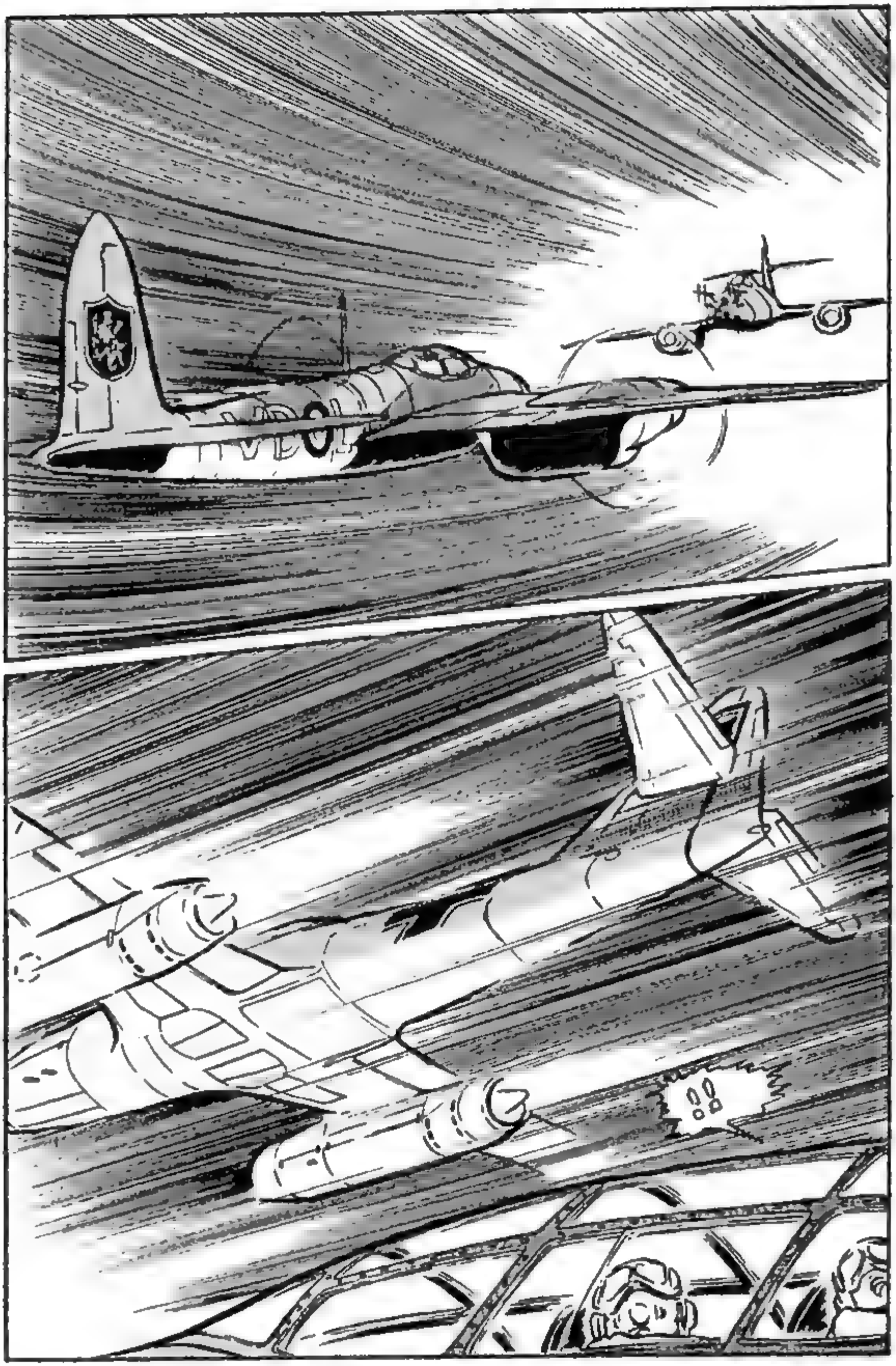

AH! YOUR ENEMY'S POSITION! I'LL READ IT OFF.
YOU'RE ALL SET, COLONEL!
GOT IT! HERE I GO!!
HE'S CIRCLING AT THE EDGE OF OUR AIR DEFENSE ZONE, ALTITUDE 10,000!
26




YOU CAN'T MATCH MY SPEED OR AGILITY. I CAN ATTACK YOU ANY WAY I WANT.
26
NOW OUR ROLES ARE REVERSED, SIR WINDSOR.
I HAVE THE SUPERIOR STEEL STEED.


DO YOU KNOW OF THE EXISTENCE OF JETS, MY INSISTENT FOE?


IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL YOU'LL CRASH HEAD-ON AND DIE!!!
COLONEL! HE'S TURNED AND IS HEADING STRAIGHT FOR YOU!!
IF THAT'S WHAT HE WANTS, THEN SO BE IT. I'M SORRY, ILSA ....



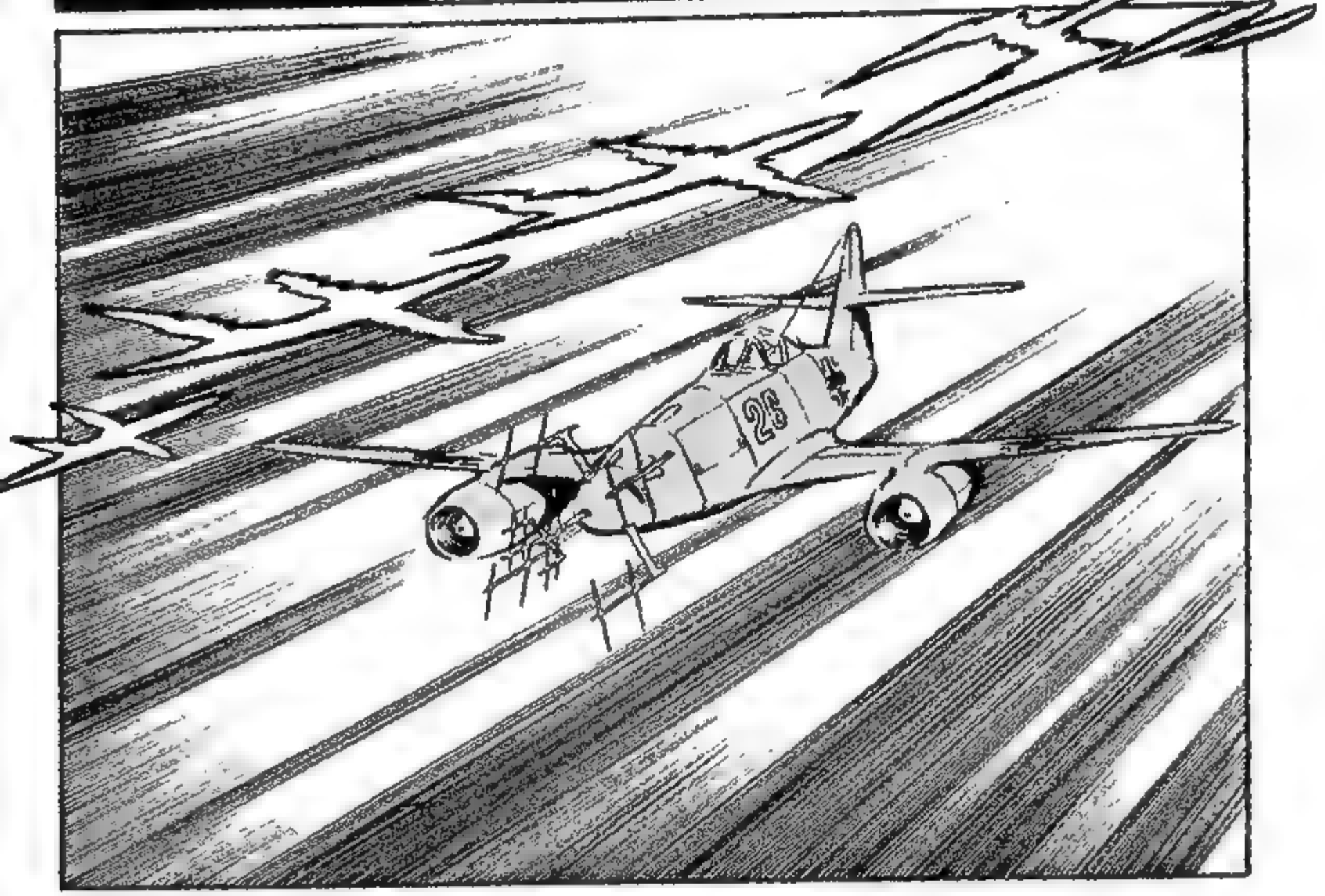
IT'S HIM!!!
THAT WAS CLOSE!
ALL RIGHT. NOW YOU KNOW. TIME FOR ROUND TWO. AS THE YANKS WOULD SAY, RAISE OR CALL?

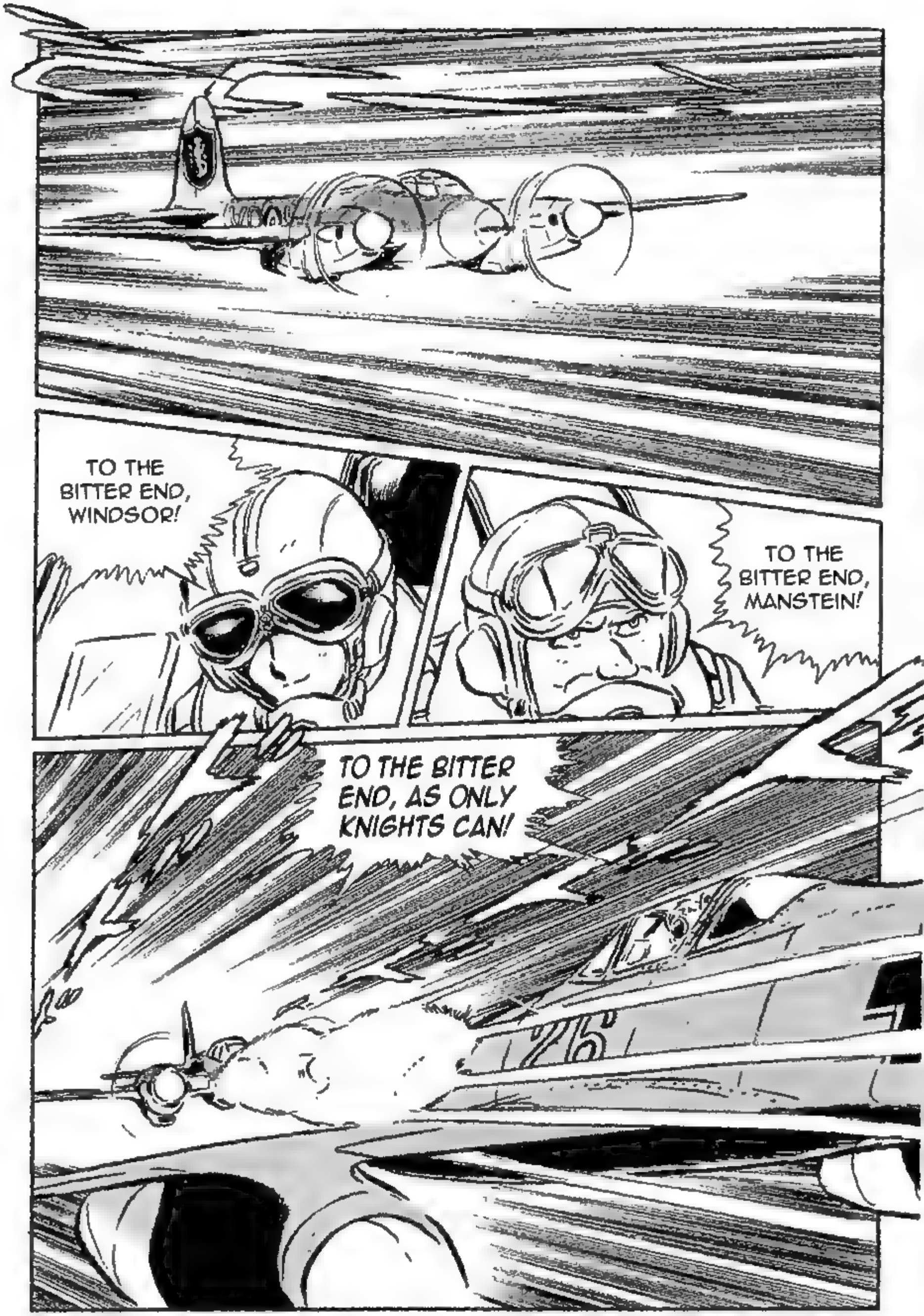
COLONEL! DON'T DO IT! GET OUT OF THERE!!

DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE? BOTH HAVE TURNED AND ARE HEADING STRAIGHT FOR EACH OTHER!

WHAT'S HE DOING?!

SIR, THEY'RE BOTH KNIGHTS. THIS IS LIKE AN AERIAL JOUST!




TO THE BITTER END, WINDSOR!
TO THE BITTER END, MANSTEIN!
TO THE BITTER END, AS ONLY KNIGHTS CAN!

SIR ... ... BOTH PLANES HAVE DROPPED OFF RADAR.

... AND THAT IS WHAT HAPPENED, BARONIN VON MEINSTEIN. I'M TRULY SORRY.
PARDON, M'LADY. IT'S ABOUT YOUR HUSBAND, SIR ARCHIBALD WINDSOR ....
MAY ... MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE.
AND WITH THAT TWO TRUE KNIGHTS AS OF OLD JOINED THEIR ANCESTORS.

TWO MEN, NOBLES IN THEIR RESPECTIVE LANDS, WHO HADN'T KNOWN EACH OTHER EXISTED FOUND THEMSELVES LOCKED IN MORTAL COMBAT DURING THE WAR IN A CLASH THAT ULTIMATELY PROVED FATEFUL TO THEM BOTH.

TWO WOMEN, WIVES OF LORDS IN SEPARATE LANDS, FOUND THEMSELVES BEREAVED OF THEIR BELOVEDS ON THAT SAME DAY ... THE DAY TWO KNIGHTS OF THE SKY DIED.

DAS ENDE

<Published in Big Comic Original, November 5, 1977 issue>

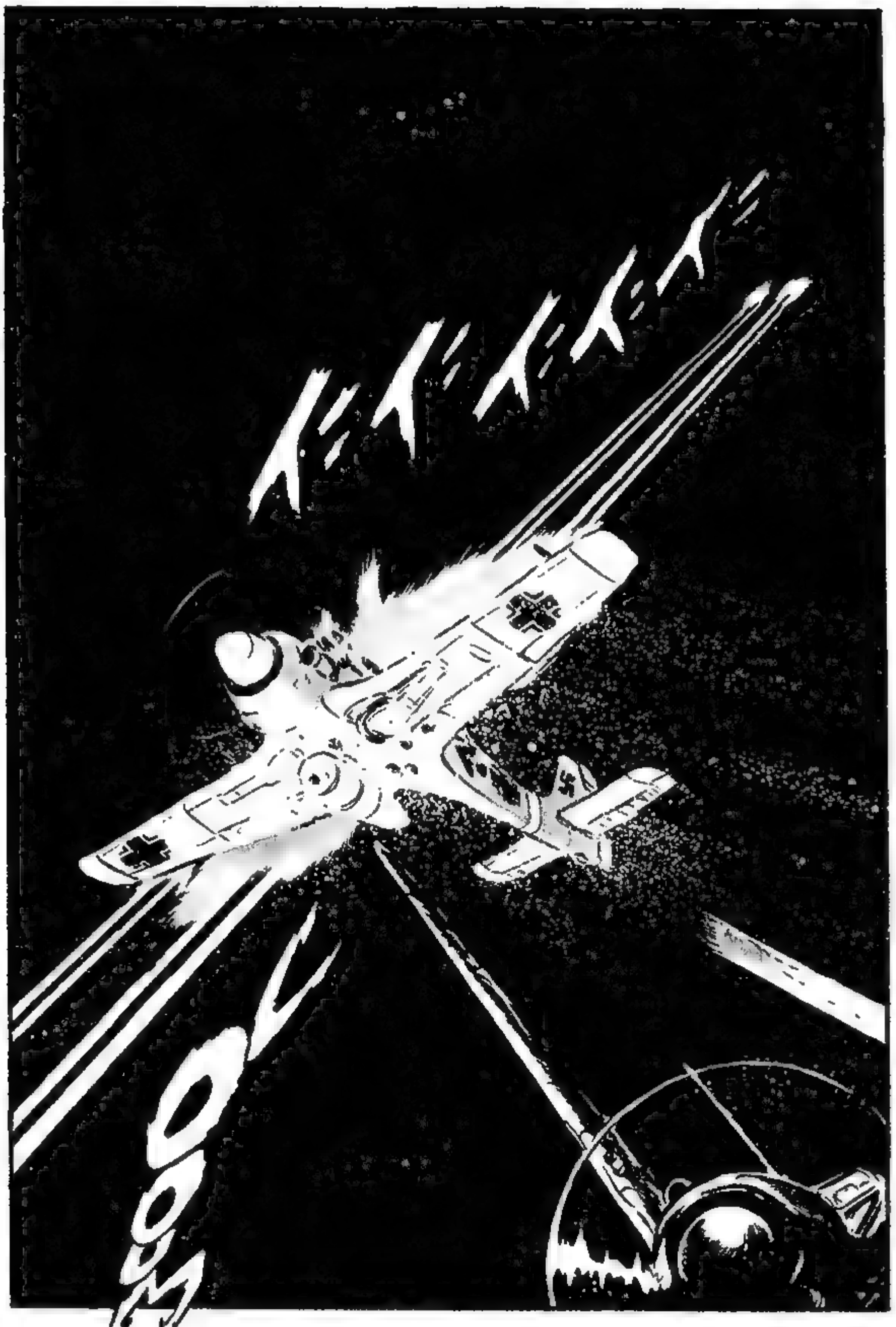
LEIJI
MATSUMOTO
PRESENTS

THE COCKPIT

STRATOSPHERIC AIR CURRENT

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, NO ONE WOULD HAVE IMAGINED THAT HUMANS WOULD ONE DAY BE FLYING IN THE STRATOSPHERE. BY THE SAME TOKEN NONE WOULD HAVE DREAMED IT POSSIBLE TO FIGHT ONE'S FELLOW MAN IN THE STRATOSPHERE.

STRATOSPHERIC AIR CURRENT


ACTE
GORE

STRATOSPHERIC AIR CURRENT

AAHH!!!

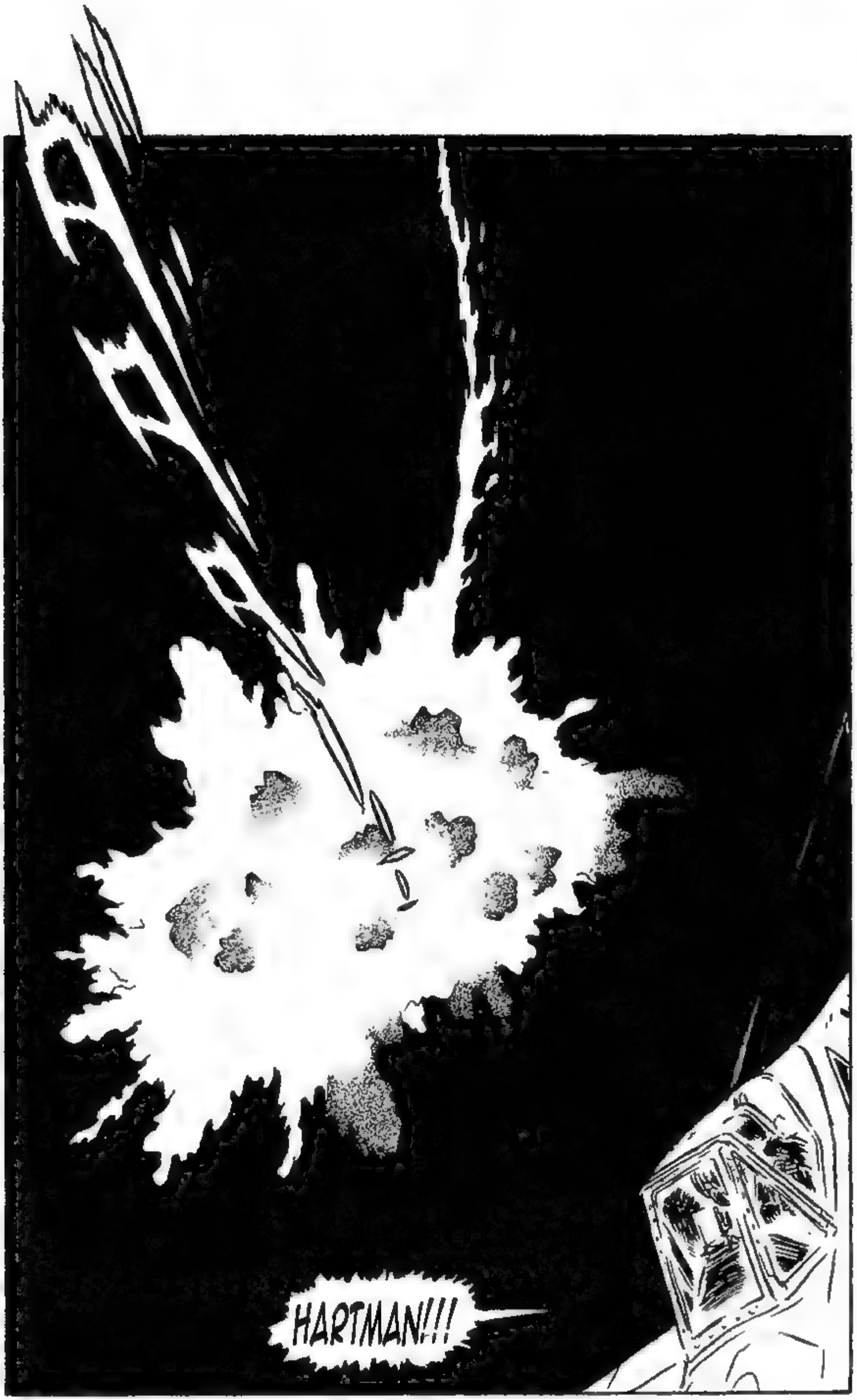
AAAHHH! YAAAH!! AAAHH!!!

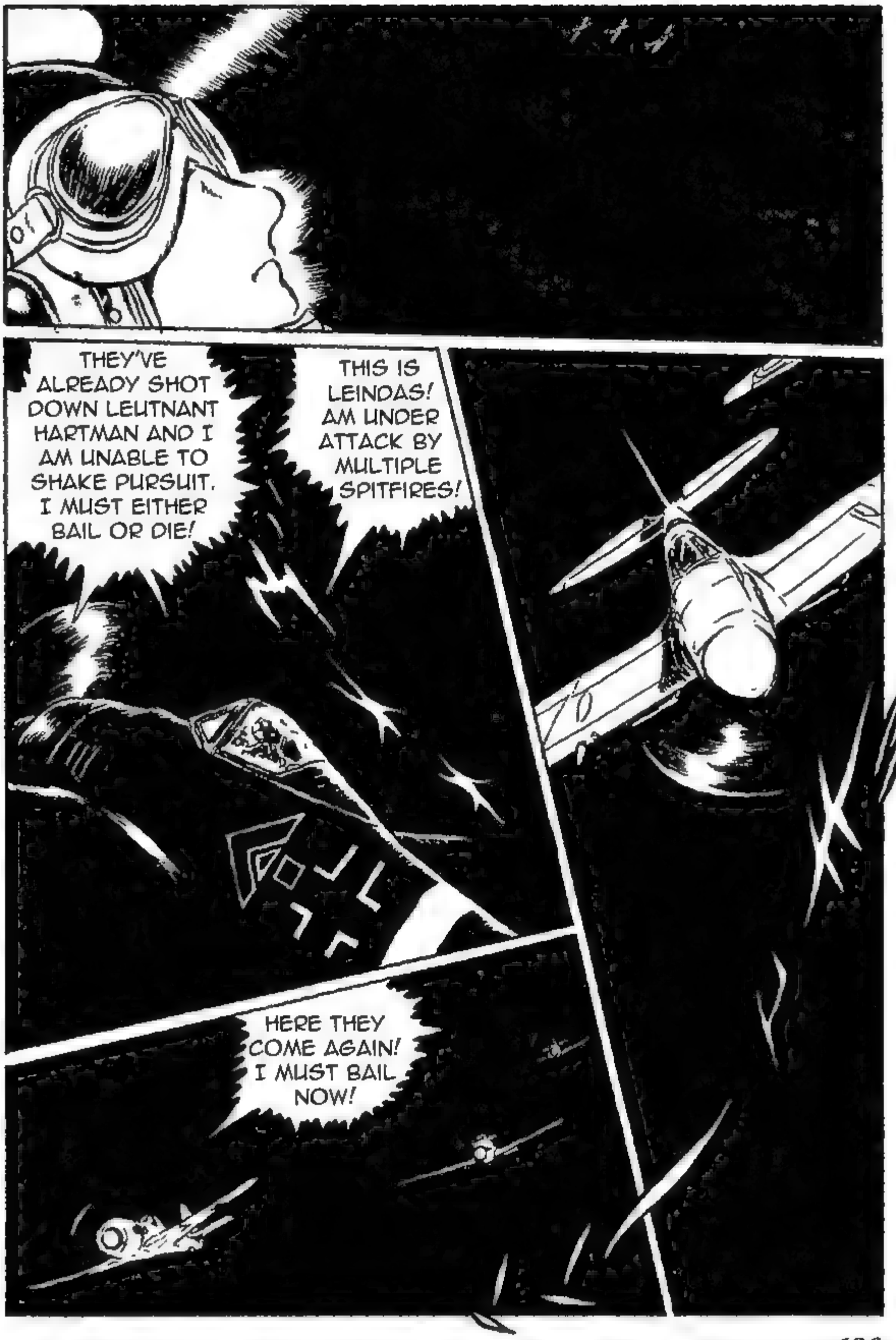
BREAK THE CANOPY! YOU'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THERE!!

I CAN'T FIND -- TOO LATE! THE FIRE'S IN HERE! NO!! NO!!!!

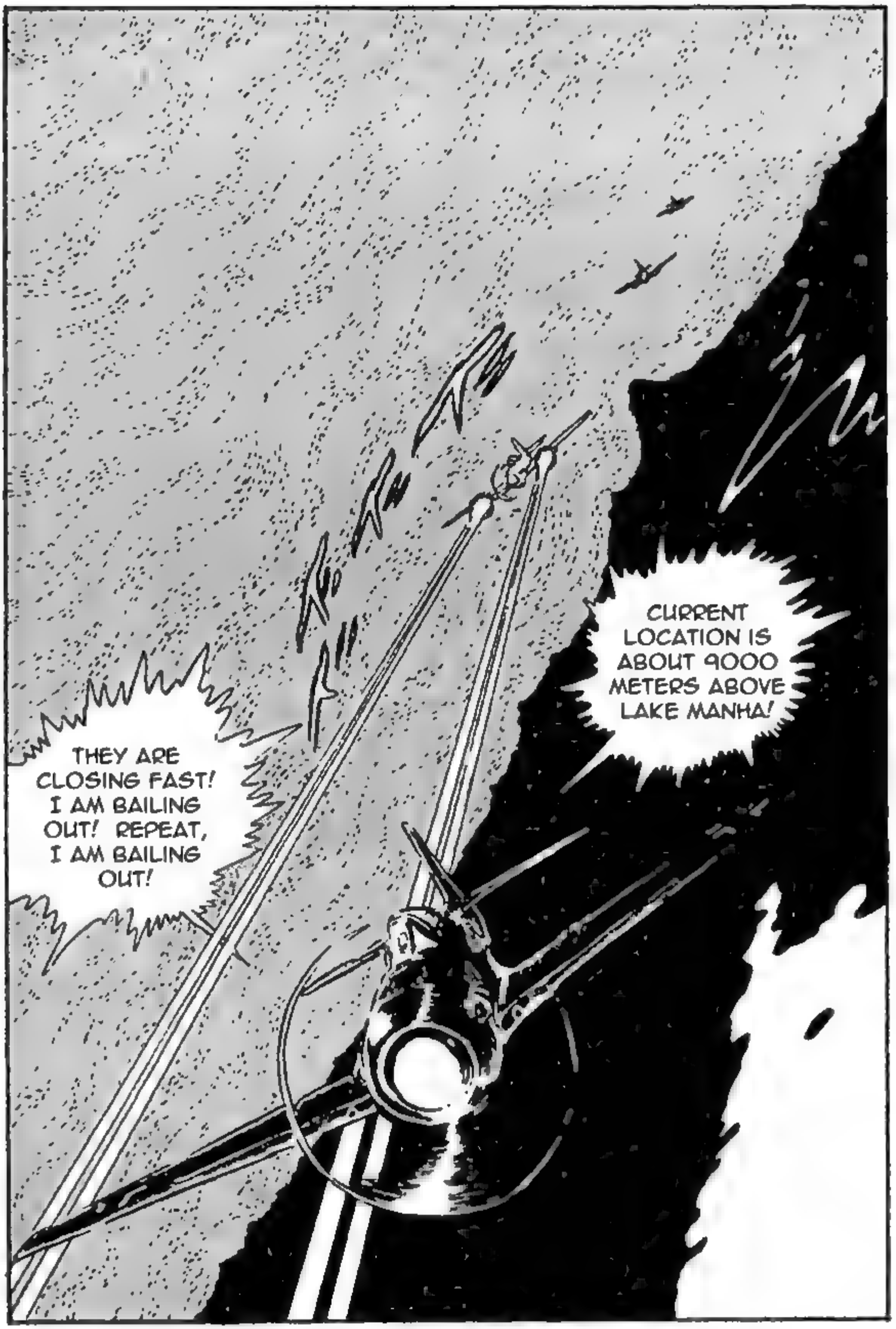
HARTMAN! BAIL OUT! DO YOU HEAR?! BAIL OUT!!

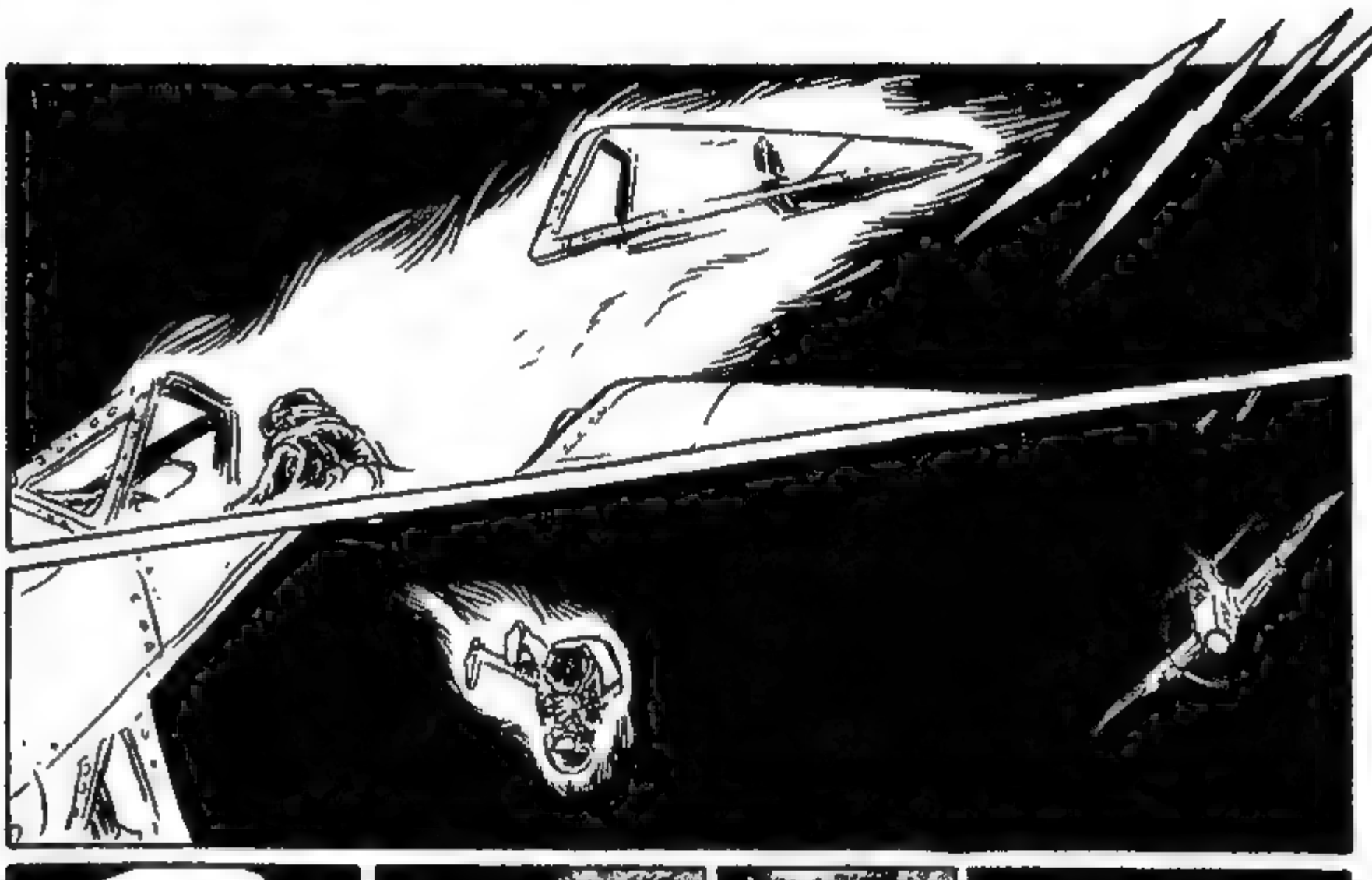
THE CANOPY LEVER! IT'S JAMMED!


HARTMAN!!!

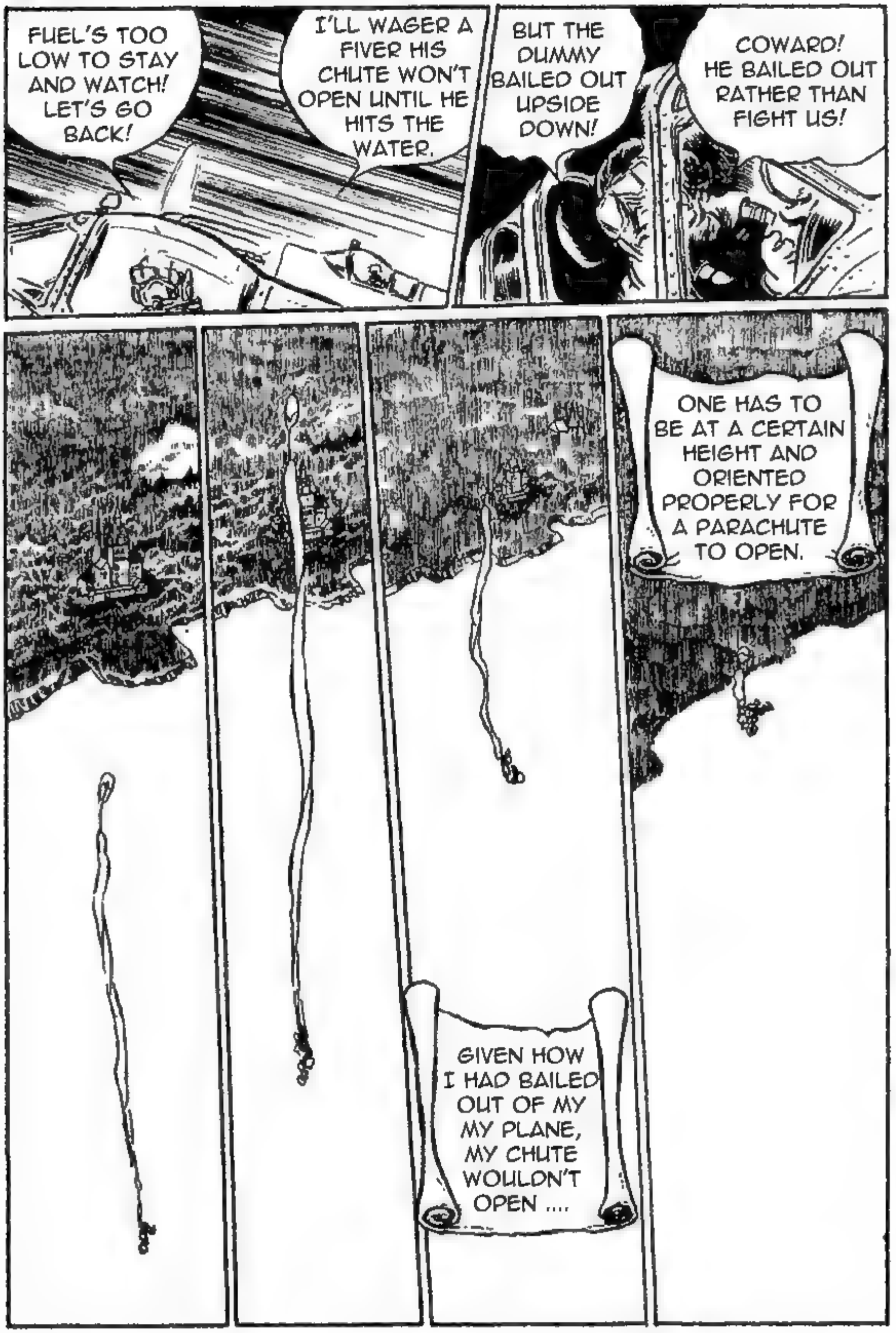

THEY'VE ALREADY SHOT DOWN LEUTNANT HARTMAN AND I AM UNABLE TO SHAKE PURSUIT. I MUST EITHER BAIL OR DIE!
THIS IS LEINDAS! AM UNDER ATTACK BY MULTIPLE SPITFIRES!
HERE THEY COME AGAIN! I MUST BAIL NOW!

STRATOSPHERIC AIR CURRENT





STRATOSPHERIC AIR CURRENT


FUEL'S TOO LOW TO STAY AND WATCH! LET'S GO BACK!
I'LL WAGER A FIVER HIS CHUTE WON'T OPEN UNTIL HE HITS THE WATER.
BUT THE DUMMY BAILED OUT UPSIDE DOWN!
COWARD! HE BAILED OUT RATHER THAN FIGHT US!
ONE HAS TO BE AT A CERTAIN HEIGHT AND ORIENTED PROPERLY FOR A PARACHUTE TO OPEN.
GIVEN HOW I HAD BAILED OUT OF MY MY PLANE, MY CHUTE WOULDN'T OPEN ....

KER-SPLASH!!!

STRATOSPHERIC AIR CURRENT

MY NAME IS ERHART VON LEINDAS. AUGUST 1944 FOUND ME LOOKING AT THE STARS AS I FLOATED ON MY BACK IN LAKE MANHA, THANKFUL TO BE ALIVE AFTER BAILING OUT OF MY PLANE.
THOSE STARS FILLED THE ENTIRE SKY. IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL SIGHT, OR WOULD HAVE BEEN UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

AS I SWAM TO SHALLOW WATER MY EGO BURNED WITH THE SHAME OF HAVING SUFFERED MY FIRST DEFEAT IN AERIAL COMBAT.

NO...!

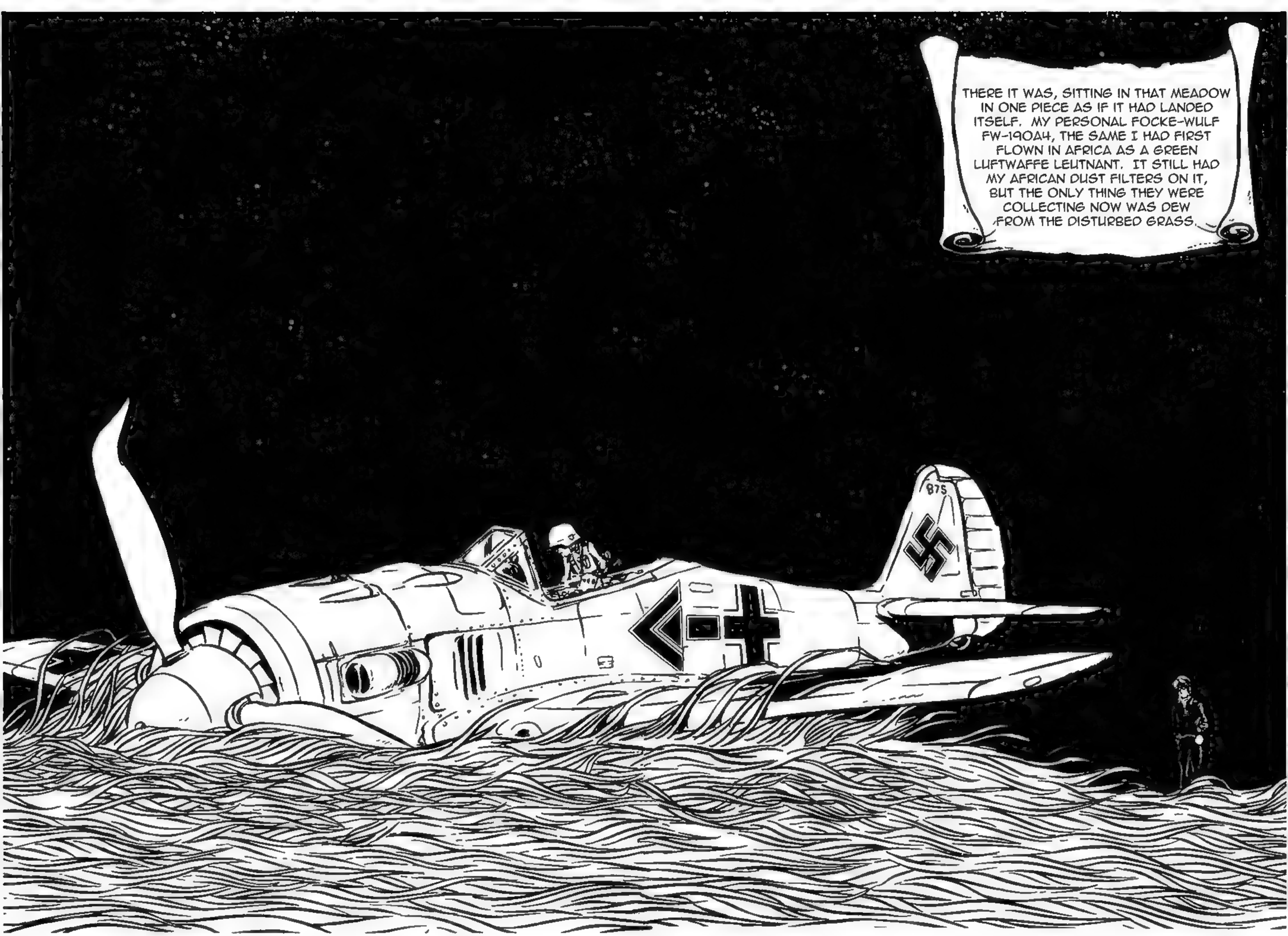
I DARESAY YOUR PLANE ISN'T WET.

AH, KAPITAN! HEIL HITLER! IT'S A GOOD THING YOU LANDED ON FRIENDLY SOIL.

MY PLANE? WHERE?!

STRATOSPHERIC AIR CURRENT

THERE IT WAS, SITTING IN THAT MEADOW IN ONE PIECE AS IF IT HAD LANDED ITSELF. MY PERSONAL FOCKE-WULF FW-190A4, THE SAME I HAD FIRST FLOWN IN AFRICA AS A GREEN LUFTWAFFE LEUTNANT. IT STILL HAD MY AFRICAN DUST FILTERS ON IT, BUT THE ONLY THING THEY WERE COLLECTING NOW WAS DEW FROM THE DISTURBED GRASS.

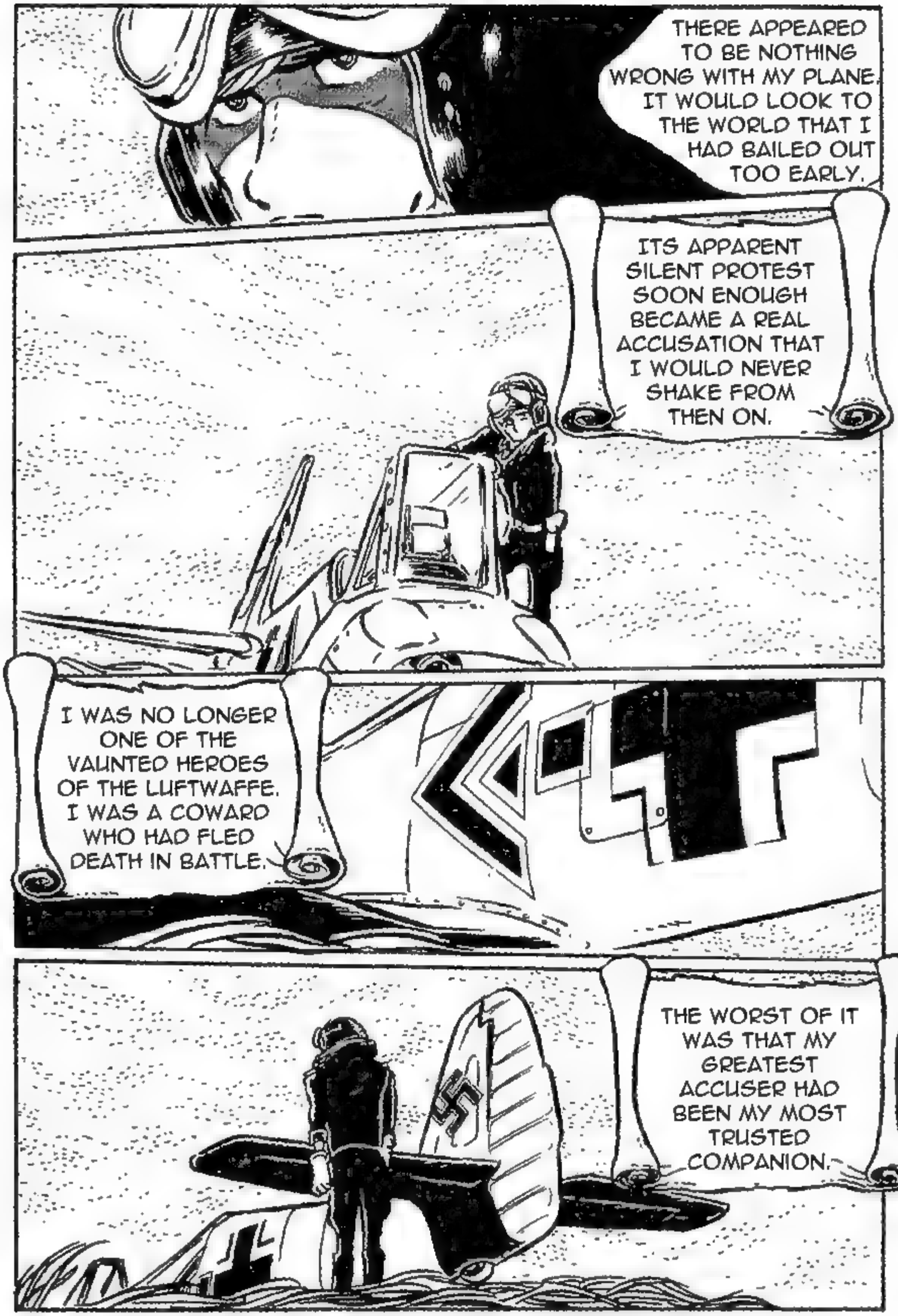


THERE WAS NO SIGN OF BULLET HOLES OR OTHER BATTLE DAMAGE. JUST SOME SCRAPE MARKS ON THE UNDERSIDE REVEALING ITS OLD AFRICAN COLORS.

THE FOCKE-WULF FW-190 WAS ONE OF THE GREAT FIGHTER PLANES OF THE WAR. IT RANKED RIGHT UP THERE WITH THE BRITISH SPITFIRE, THE AMERICAN MUSTANG, AND THE JAPANESE ZERO.

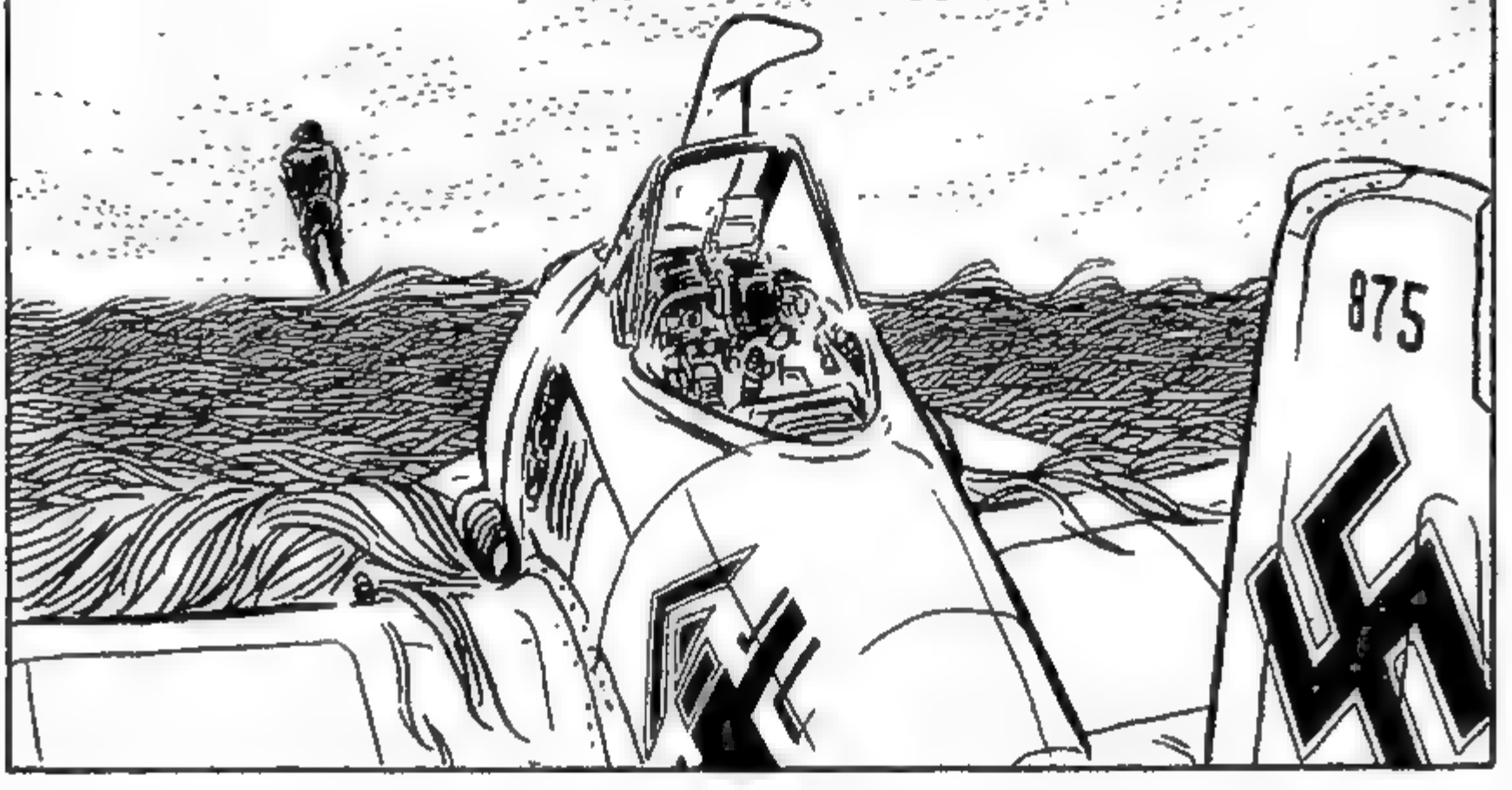
THIS ONE HAD FLOWN ON ALONE AFTER I HAD ABANDONED IT, AS IF TRYING TO MAKE UP FOR ITS PILOT'S DEPARTURE.

OR WAS IT ONE LAST ACT OF SPITE AGAINST ITS PILOT, FOR BAILING OUT INSTEAD OF DYING IN BATTLE?


THERE APPEARED TO BE NOTHING WRONG WITH MY PLANE. IT WOULD LOOK TO THE WORLD THAT I HAD BAILED OUT TOO EARLY.
ITS APPARENT SILENT PROTEST SOON ENOUGH BECAME A REAL ACCUSATION THAT I WOULD NEVER SHAKE FROM THEN ON.
I WAS NO LONGER ONE OF THE VAUNTED HEROES OF THE LUFTWAFFE. I WAS A COWARD WHO HAD FLED DEATH IN BATTLE.
THE WORST OF IT WAS THAT MY GREATEST ACCUSER HAD BEEN MY MOST TRUSTED COMPANION.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO SAID THEN AND STILL SAY NOW THAT I SHOULD HAVE DIED ALONG WITH MY PLANE IN THAT UNEVEN FIGHT I FACED WITH THOSE THREE BRITISH SPITFIRES. THEY EITHER FAIL OR DELIBERATELY IGNORE THE HUMAN INSTINCT FOR SURVIVAL AT ANY COST.

MY COST WAS MY REPUTATION AS A FIGHTER PILOT. IT ONLY HAPPENED THE ONE TIME ... BUT THAT ONE TIME WOULD DOG ME FOR THE REST OF MY DAYS ....



STRATOSPHERIC AIR CURRENT

HIGHER THAN THAT ITS BMW ENGINE BECOMES SLUGGISH, WHICH AFFECTS COMBAT PERFORMANCE, SIR.

THEIR OPTIMUM PERFORMANCE CEILING IS HIGHER THAN THE FOCKE WULF'S 7000 METERS.

ALL THREE WERE MARK 24 SPITFIRES, WITH CLIPPED WING-TIPS TO INCREASE MANEUVERABILITY AND ROLLS-ROYCE GRIFFON ENGINES FOR POWER.

ABOVE IT CAN'T BECAUSE OF THAT GRIFFON ENGINE -- WHICH THE AMERICAN P-51D MUSTANG ALSO HAS.

BELOW 7000 METERS IT CAN BEAT THEM.

LEINDAS, ARE YOU CHOOSING TO INSULT THE GREATNESS OF OUR FOCKE-WULF FW-190 BY CLAIMING IT'S EASY PREY?

TRYING TO GET A FOCKE-WULF TO FIGHT WELL THAT HIGH UP IS LIKE ASKING A PIG TO SLOP IN SAND, OR A DUCK TO SWIM IN DIRT.

USE IT LIKE IT WAS DESIGNED TO BE USED AND IT'S AMONG THE BEST IN THE AIR.

... THAT DEPENDS ON HOW AND WHERE YOU USE IT.

NOT AT ALL, OBERST* BAFFSTEIN SIR. I'M SAYING ...

THAT'S ALL I'M SAYING, SIR. I WOULD NEVER INSULT THE FOCKE WULF. I KNOW IT TOO WELL.

IF YOU USE IT IN ANY OTHER WAY, THEN YOU MIGHT AS WELL ORDER A FULLY ARMED KNIGHT ON HORSEBACK TO FIGHT IN THE SEA.

(*) *OBERST* - THE GERMAN WORD FOR THE MILITARY RANK OF COLONEL.

A MISSION HAS COME UP THAT REQUIRES AN EXPERIENCED FIGHTER PILOT ...

THANK YOU SIR. IF I MAY BE SO BOLD, WILL I GET TO FLY AGAIN?

YOU'VE HAD AN EXCELLENT RECORD UP UNTIL NOW, SO I WON'T ARGUE.

... BUT ONE WHO IS CONSIDERED EXPENDABLE. I WOULD SAY THAT RIGHT NOW YOU FIT THAT BILL, LEINDAS.

ABSOLUTELY. THAT'S WHAT THIS SPECIAL MISSION IS ABOUT, LEINDAS.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SIR?

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, SIR. WE'RE GOING TO NEED MORE AND WITH BIGGER WARHEADS.

AH! OUR NEW V-2 ROCKET, WITH WHICH WE HOPE TO WIN THE WAR!

STRATOSPHERIC AIR CURRENT

THIS SPECIAL MISSION WILL BE ITS FIRST, AND AS ITS PILOT YOU GET TO PUT IT THROUGH ITS PACES.
YOU'LL BE FLYING A NEW PROTOTYPE FIGHTER AS MISSION ESCORT.
I UNDERSTAND AND ACCEPT, SIR. THANK YOU. WHAT ELSE AWAITS ME ON THIS SPECIAL MISSION?
AND IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG WITH IT THEN I'LL BE NO LOSS.
WHY ALL THE SECRECY? I NEED TO KNOW IF I'M TO DO MY BEST.
AN AMERI-CAN B-17!

IT WAS FORCED TO MAKE AN EMERGENCY LANDING. WE CAPTURED IT, OF COURSE.

BUT ... BUT HOW? AND IN ONE PIECE?!

WE'VE HAD IT REBUILT TO FERRY A DEVICE TO PEENEMUNDE.

ISN'T THAT WHERE THEY MAKE THE V-2 ROCKETS?

YOU MAY NOT. ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW IS THAT IT IS KEY TO US WINNING THE WAR.

WHAT KIND OF DEVICE, SIR, IF I MAY ASK?

DOCTOR!

I COULD ASK YOU THE SAME THING. GOOD TO SEE YOU.
HERR DOCTOR BAUMSTEIN! I'M HONORED! BUT WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
AH, BUT HE IS SERVING THE REICH, JUST AS YOU ARE HERR DOCTOR.
I WAS ALWAYS OF THE OPINION YOU'D HAVE MADE A BETTER PHYSICIST THAN A FIGHTER PLANE PILOT.
YOU-- YOU WILL?
I'LL BE ON THIS B-17, THE SAME YOU WILL ESCORT.
"SERVICE" CAN BE MANY THINGS, OBERST, AS I'M SURE YOU ARE AWARE.
YOU!
AND SO WILL I, LEINDAS.

I SEE.

MARLENE* BECAME MY ASSISTANT AFTER YOU LEFT TO GO FLY PLANES, LEINDAS.

WE'RE AMONG THE FEW LEFT IN GERMANY WHO CAN DO THIS.

THE NAZIS HAVE HAD US WORKING ON A TOP SECRET PROJECT FOR THEM, GIVEN OUR BACKGROUNDS.

... THAT I'LL BE FLYING ESCORT TO PEENEMUNDE WITH BOTH OF YOU.

I'VE BEEN TOLD NOT TO ASK. YOU'LL BE GLAD TO KNOW ...

A HAPPY REUNION! OH, LEINDAS, I'VE SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU.

MEIN GOTT! IT'S ...

(*) PRONOUNCED IN GERMAN FASHION, AS IN "MAR-LEH'-NAH," AND NOT PER THE ANGLICIZED "MAR-LEIN."

... IN THE TA-152. THIS IS A PRE-PRODUCTION PROTOTYPE, AND YOU'LL BE THE FIRST TO FLY IT.

THE NEW FOCKE-WULF TA-152. YOU MIGHT SAY IT'S THE OLD FW-190 REBORN. ALL OF ITS PROBLEMS AS YOU NOTED EARLIER ARE FIXED ...

WITH WHAT THIS CAN DO, HERR DOCTOR, YOU DON'T NEED ANY MORE.

ONLY *ONE* PLANE IS FLYING ESCORT FOR US?!

IT'S ALSO ARMED WITH A 30MM NOSE CANNON AND TWO PROP-SYNCHRONIZED 20MM AUTO CANNON IN THE WING ROOTS. ONCE YOUR TEST RESULTS ARE IN AND EVALUATED THEN IT'S PRODUCTION TIME.

ITS TOP SPEED IS 760 KM/H. ITS RATED TOP CEILING HEIGHT IS 12,500 METERS. A MORE POWERFUL DAIMLER-BENZ DB-603 ENGINE COMPLETELY ELIMINTATES THE FW-190'S SLUGGISHNESS ABOVE 7,000 METERS.

AS I SAID, ITS CARGO IS THE KEY FOR US TO WIN THIS WAR ONCE AND FOR ALL.

NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, LEINDAS, THAT B-17 *MUST* FINSH ITS TRIP.

IT'S COMPARABLE IN PERFORMANCE TO THE NEW MESSERSCHMITT ME-262 JET FIGHTER BUT ITS ENGINE IS MORE RELIABLE THAN THAT ONE'S JUMOS.

THEN WE LOSE THE WAR, AND YOU ... WELL, NEED I SAY IT?

AND IF I FAIL?

BY NOW, AND GIVEN WHAT YOU KNOW AND AND OUR SHARED PAST, YOU KNOW WHAT OUR CARGO IS.

NO, BUT THEY THREAT-ENED. IT WAS ENOUGH.

DID THEY--?

THANK YOU. I'VE MISSED YOU TOO, LEINDAS.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, MARLENE, IN SPITE OF ALL THIS. I REALLY DO MEAN THAT.

ONE THEY MADE US MAKE REAL. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IT?

BUT THAT WAS ONLY A TERRIBLE THEORY!

IT'S ALL RIGHT, SOLDIER. HE'S WITH ME. I'M DOING A FINAL CARGO CHECK.

NOW I UNDERSTAND THE SECRECY AND ALL THE SECURITY.

SO IT'S TRUE.

GO AHEAD, LEINDAS. LOOK AT THE ULTIMATE WEAPON.

AND ONCE MATED TO A V-2 ROCKET ...

THIS IS AN ATOMIC BOMB!

ATOMIC WARHEADS SIMPLE ENOUGH FOR MASS PRODUCTION, AND WITH V-2 ROCKETS TO DELIVER THEM ANYWHERE WITHIN THEIR RANGE .... THIS IS MADNESS!

IF THIS WORKS THEN THE NAZIS WILL CONQUER THE WORLD!

WHY, MARLENE? WHY?!

THIS ... THIS IS INCREDBILE! IT ALSO GOES AGAINST ALL YOU FATHER TAUGHT!

WE HAD NO CHOICE.

WHY DID HE DO IT WHEN HE KNEW FULL WELL WHAT IT COULD DO AND HOW THEY'D USE IT?

IT'S NEVER BEEN TESTED BUT THE THEORY IS SOUND, AND MY FATHER'S DESIGN IS SIMPLE BUT SUFFICIENT.

YES ... I CAN SEE IN MY MIND HOW THIS WOULD WORK.

... AND AFTER LONDON AND OTHER BRITISH CITIES THEY'LL GO FOR MOSCOW, WASHINGTON, ANYWHERE THEIR MISSLES CAN REACH!

IT WON'T STOP WITH THE V-2! THEY'LL MAKE BIGGER LONG RANGE ROCKETS ...

WHOEVER USES IT FIRST WILL GO DOWN IN HISTORY AS HEARTLESS, RUTHLESS MONSTERS ...

YOU SHOULD KNOW THE ALLIES ARE WORKING ON THIS TOO.

... WHO SOLD THEIR SOULS TO THE DEVIL IN EXCHANGE FOR THE ABILITY TO WIELD THE ULTIMATE POWER OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION OVER MANKIND.

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE THIS IN MY LIFETIME, LET ALONE BE A PART OF IT.

THE ULTIMATE POWER ....

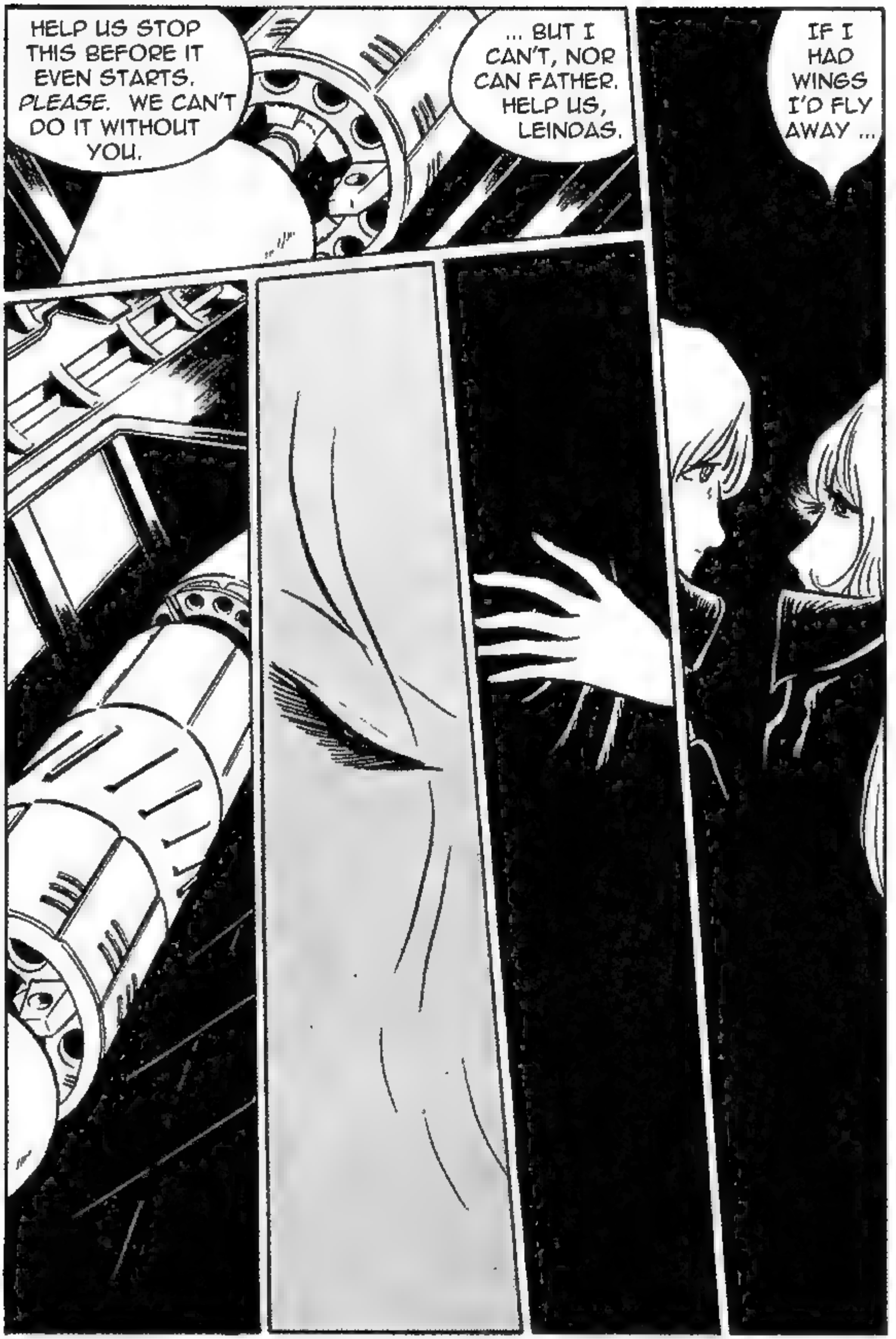
BUT IF THE NAZIS ARE STOPPED FROM BEING THE FIRST ...

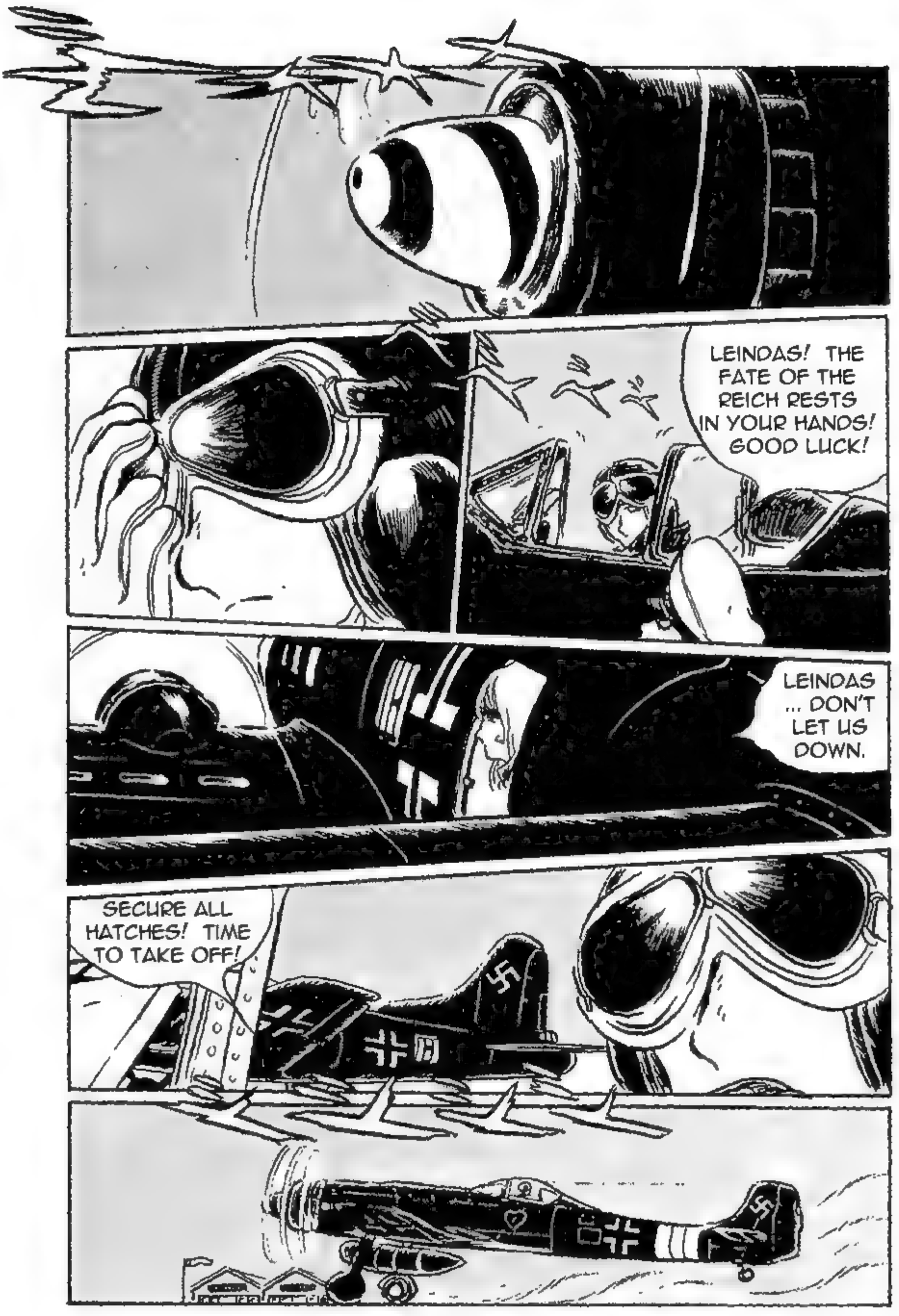
... SOMEDAY AN ATOMIC WAR WILL BE FOUGHT, AND MANKIND WILL BE WIPED OUT.

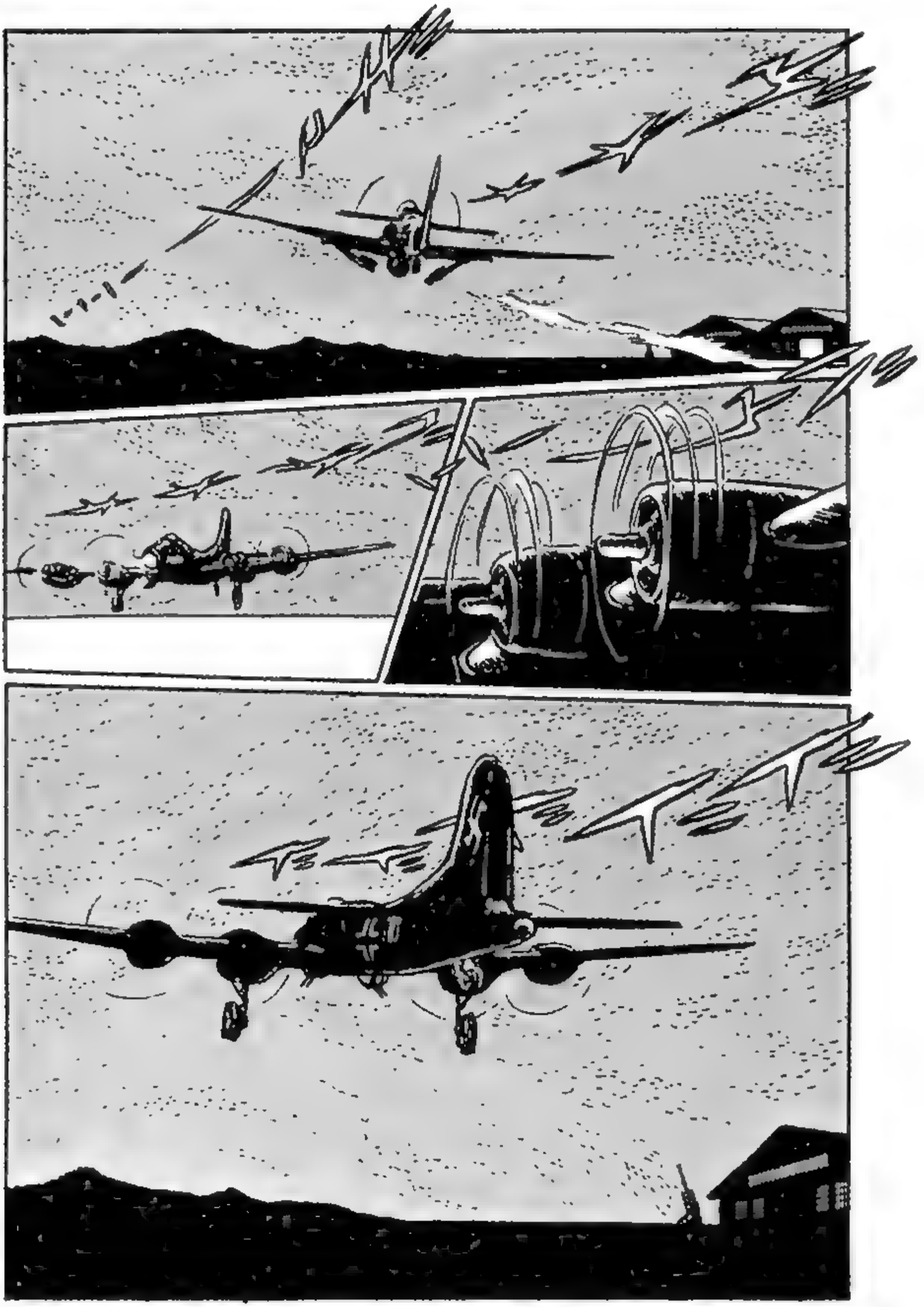
OF COURSE IT WON'T STOP THERE. EVERY NATION WILL HAVE TO HAVE ATOMIC WEAPONS ...

HELP US STOP THIS, LEINDAS. MY FATHER AND I BEG YOU.

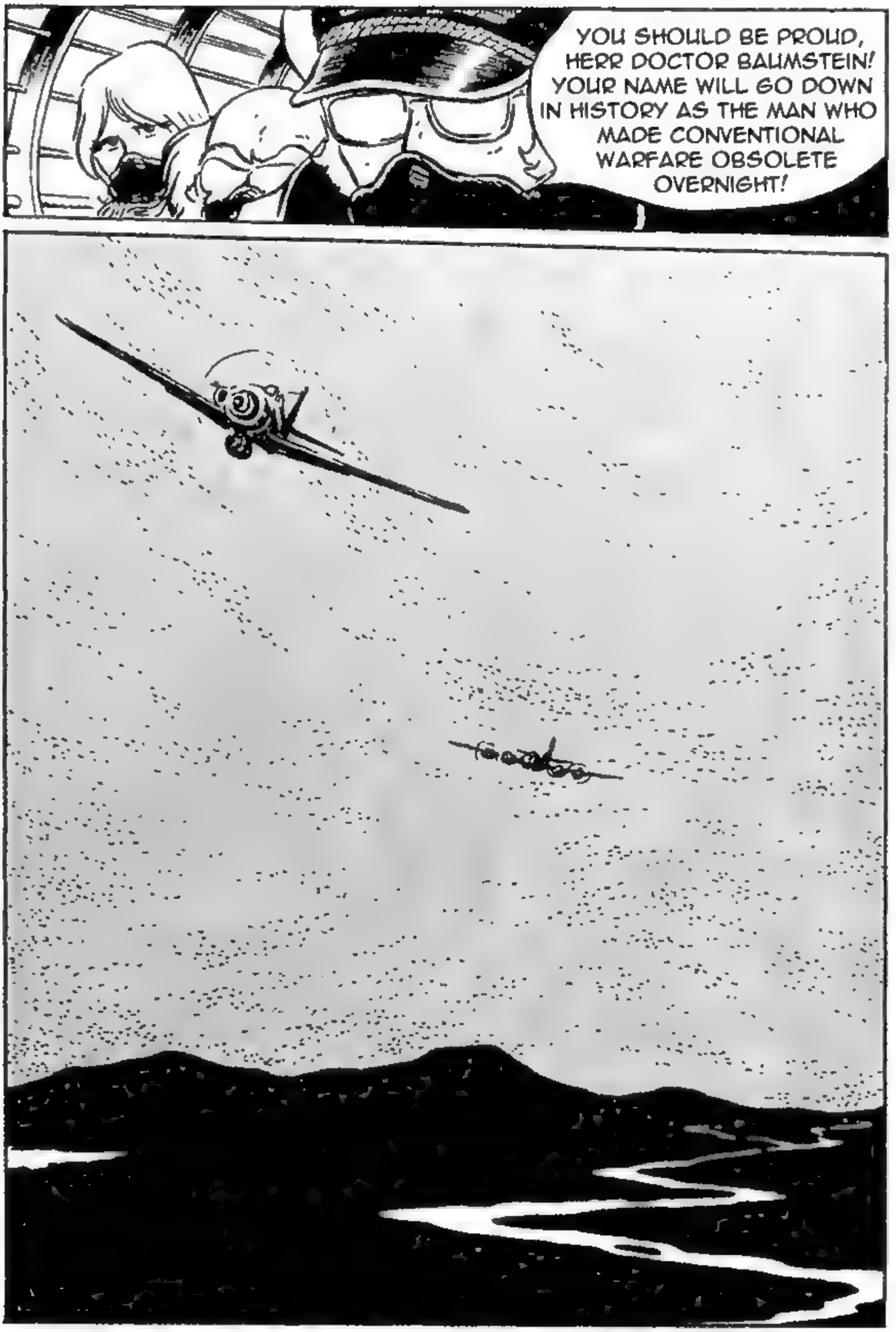
... THEN PERHAPS THAT TERRIBLE DAY CAN BE DELAYED.

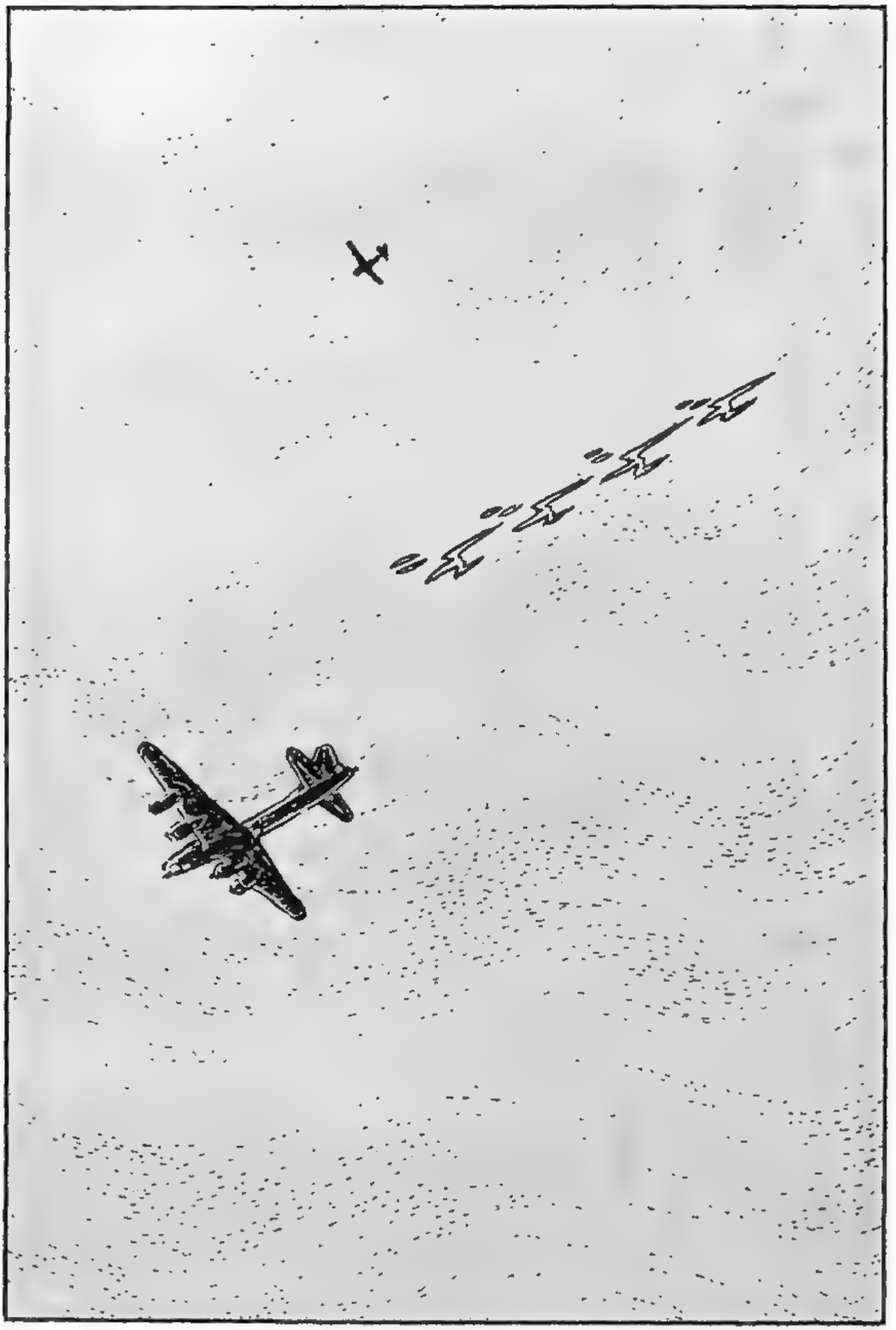

HELP US STOP THIS BEFORE IT EVEN STARTS. *PLEASE.* WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU.
... BUT I CAN'T, NOR CAN FATHER. HELP US, LEINDAS.
IF I HAD WINGS I'D FLY AWAY ...


LEINDAS! THE FATE OF THE REICH RESTS IN YOUR HANDS! GOOD LUCK!
LEINDAS ... DON'T LET US DOWN.
SECURE ALL HATCHES! TIME TO TAKE OFF!

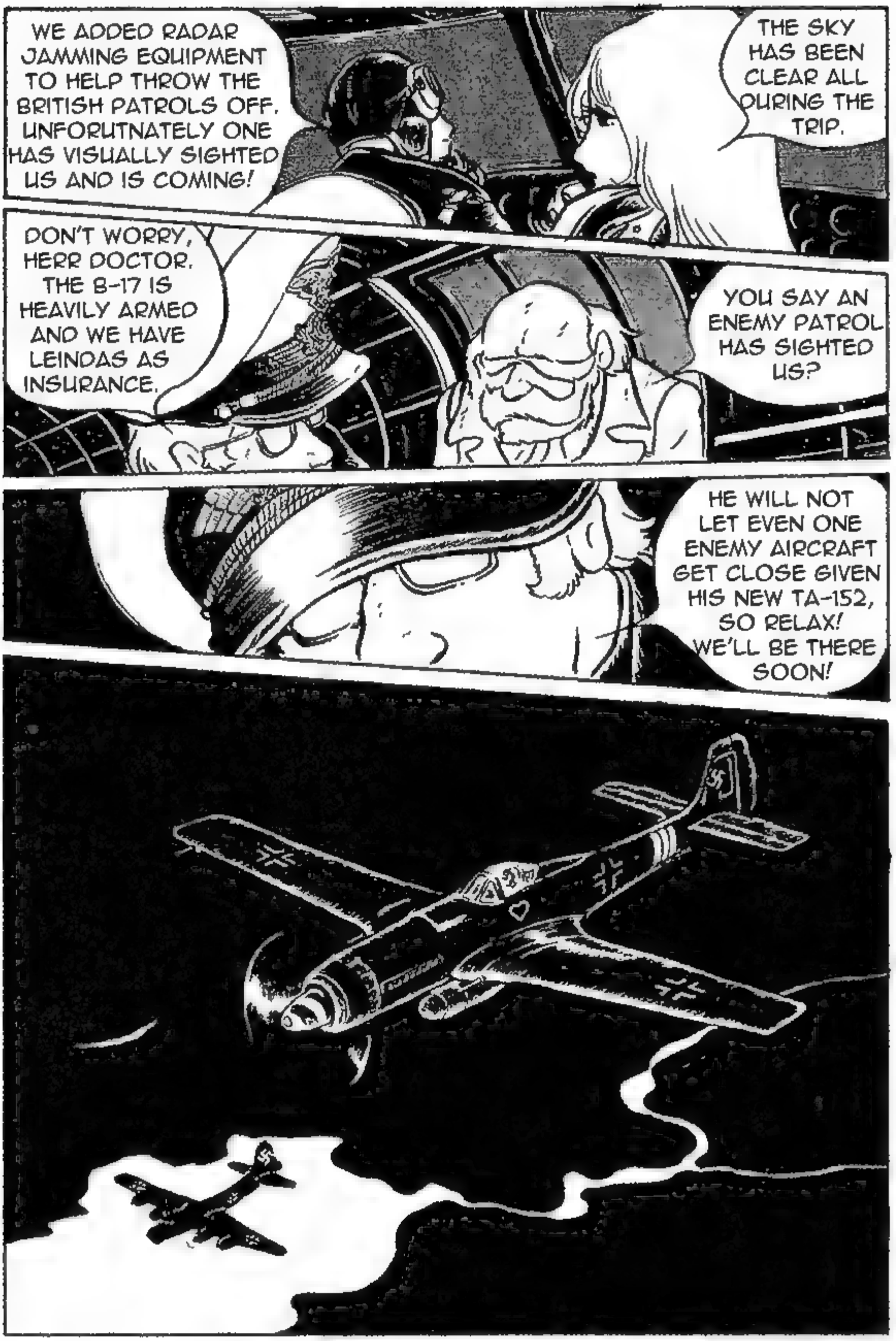


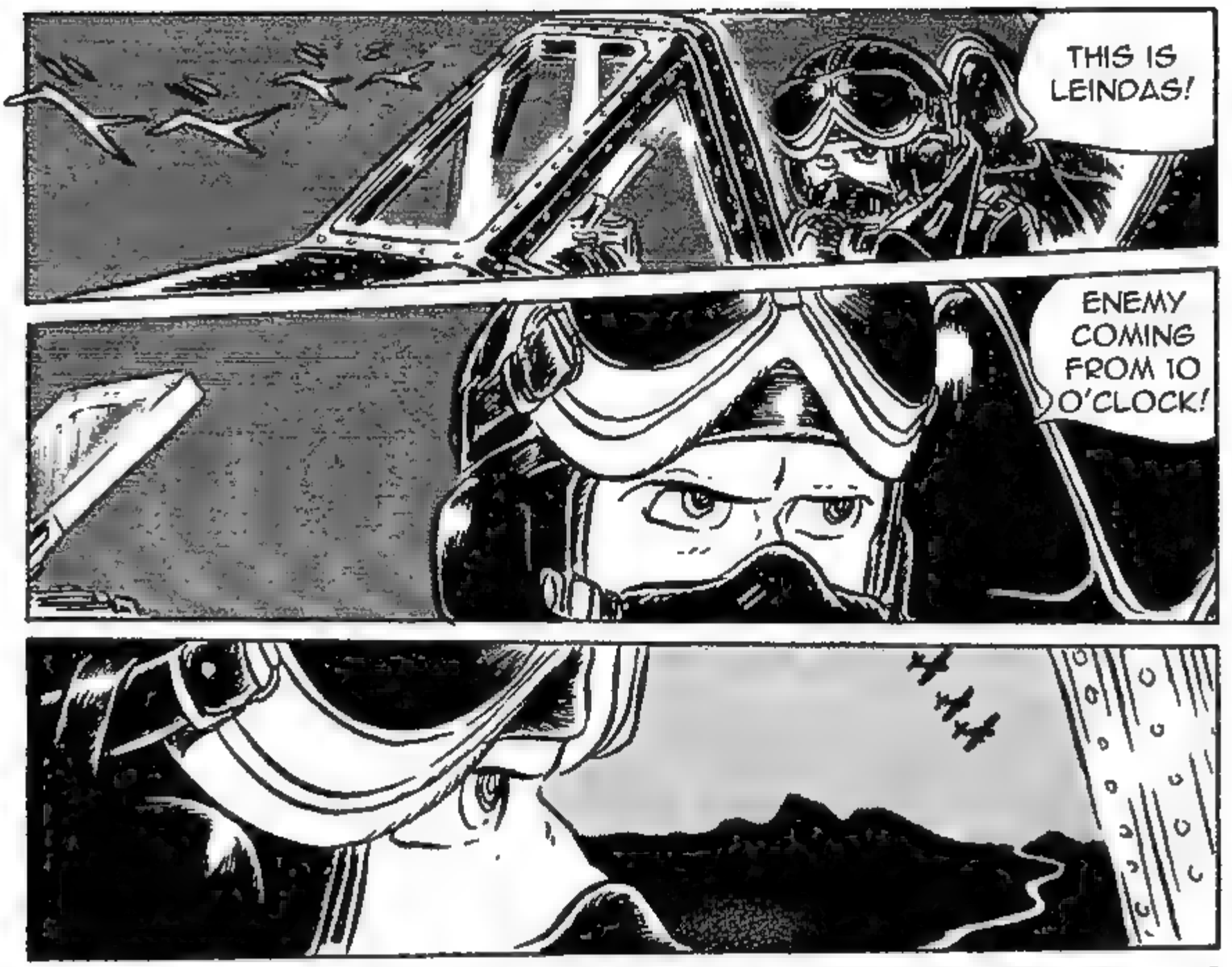
STRATOSPHERIC AIR CURRENT

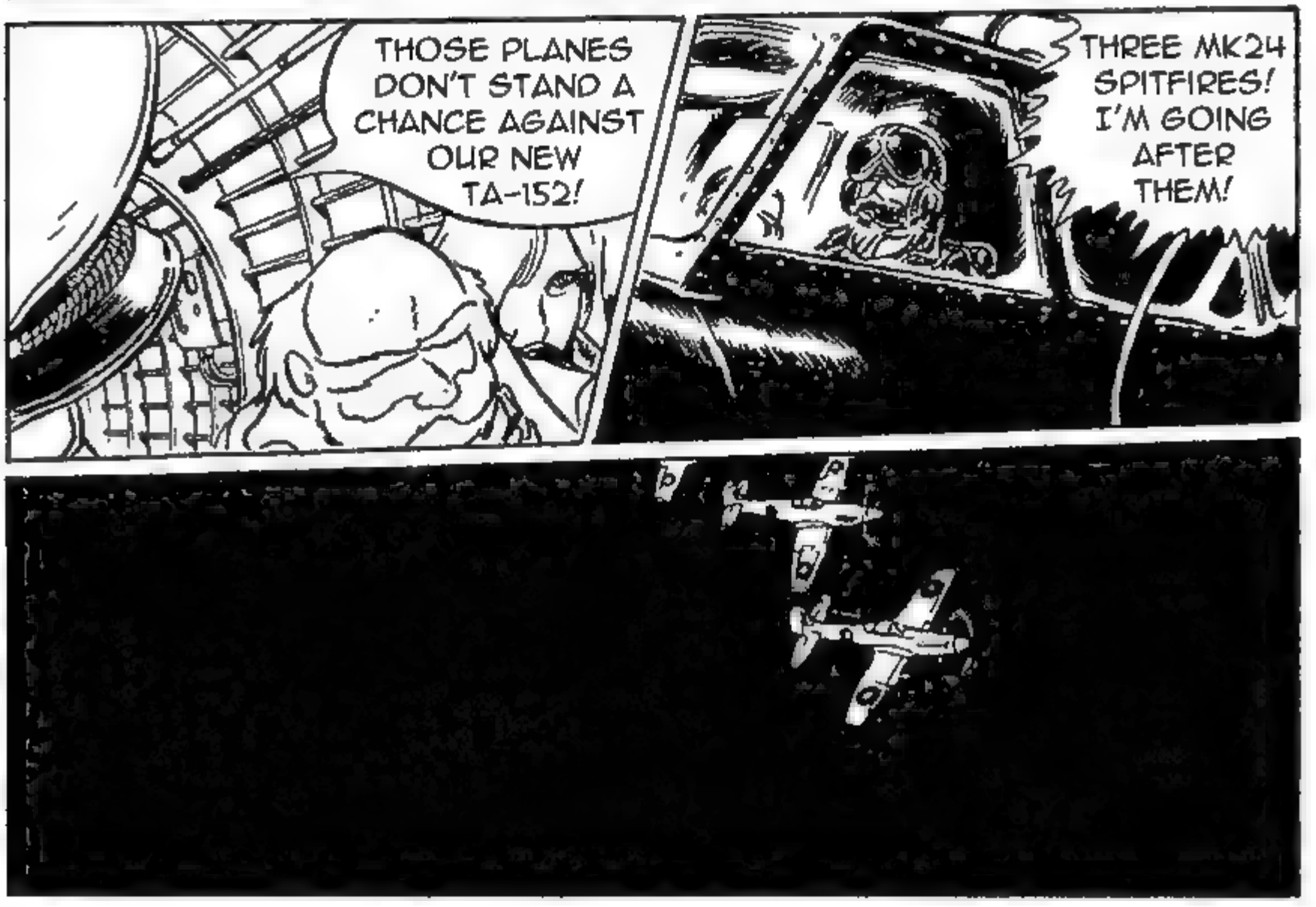

YOU SHOULD BE PROUD, HERR DOCTOR BAUMSTEIN! YOUR NAME WILL GO DOWN IN HISTORY AS THE MAN WHO MADE CONVENTIONAL WARFARE OBSOLETE OVERNIGHT!

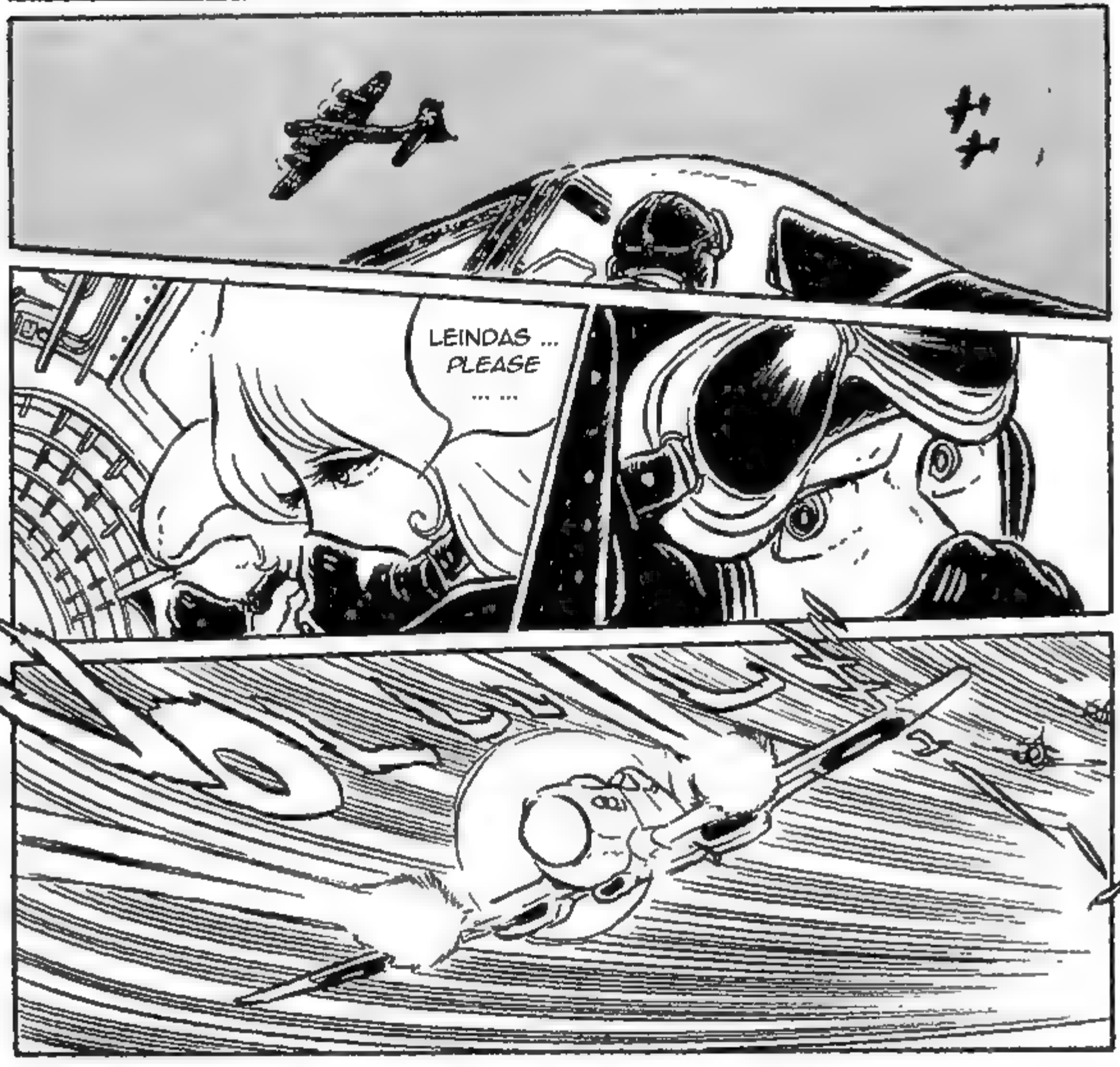


STRATOSPHERIC AIR CURRENT


WE ADDED RADAR JAMMING EQUIPMENT TO HELP THROW THE BRITISH PATROLS OFF. UNFORUTNATELY ONE HAS VISUALLY SIGHTED US AND IS COMING!
THE SKY HAS BEEN CLEAR ALL DURING THE TRIP.
DON'T WORRY, HERR DOCTOR. THE B-17 IS HEAVILY ARMED AND WE HAVE LEINDAS AS INSURANCE.
YOU SAY AN ENEMY PATROL HAS SIGHTED US?
HE WILL NOT LET EVEN ONE ENEMY AIRCRAFT GET CLOSE GIVEN HIS NEW TA-152, SO RELAX! WE'LL BE THERE SOON!


THIS IS LEINDAS!
ENEMY COMING FROM 10 O'CLOCK!


THOSE PLANES DON'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST OUR NEW TA-152!
THREE MK24 SPITFIRES! I'M GOING AFTER THEM!


LEINDAS ...
PLEASE
... ...

WE ARE UNDER HEAVY ENEMY ATTACK!!

LEINDAS! WHERE ARE YOU?!

WHAT TH--?!

LEINDAS! LEINDAS!! COME IN LEINDAS!!!

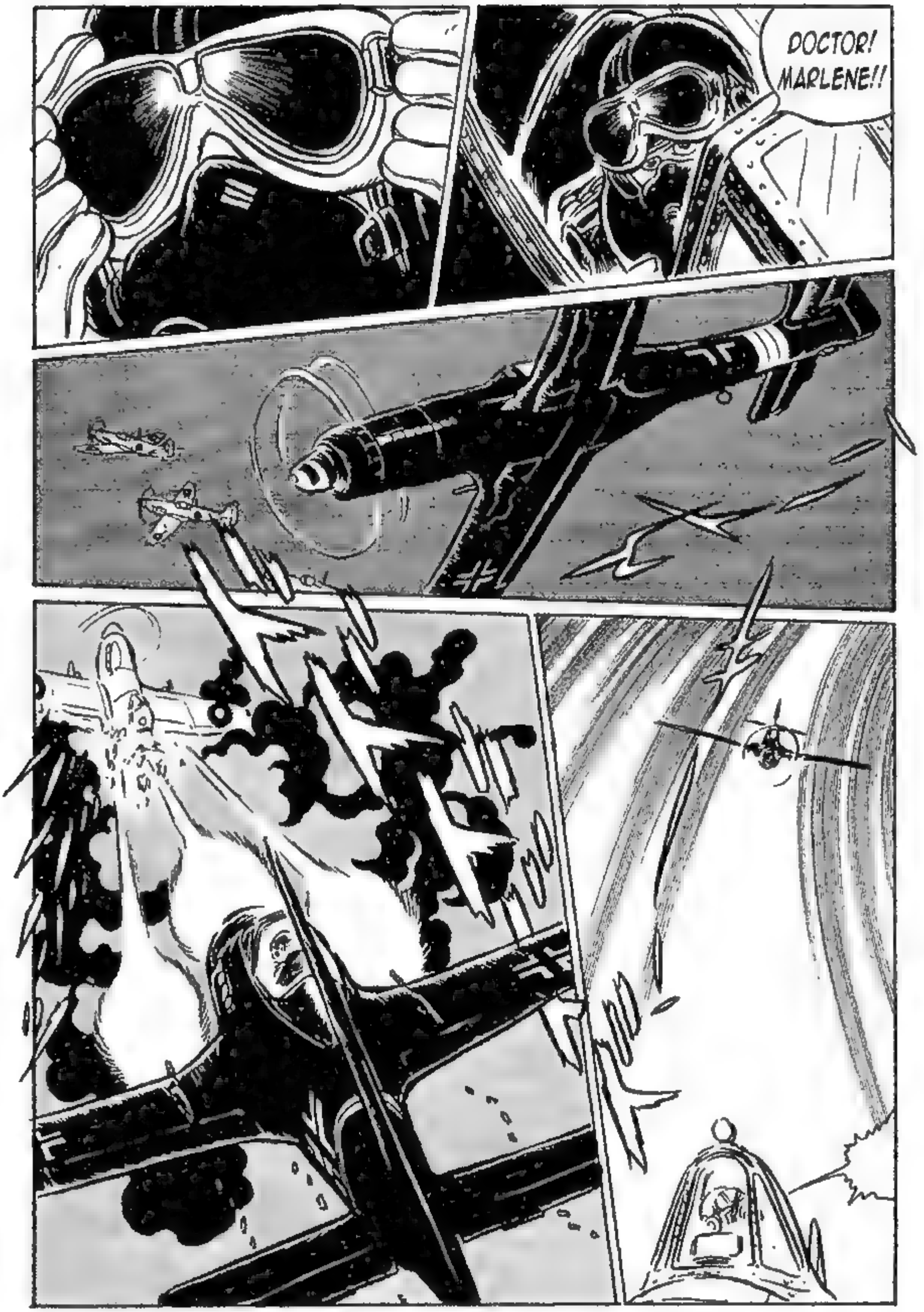
I UNDERSTAND. YOU'RE FORGIVEN, LEINDAS. YOU DID THE RIGHT THING. THANK YOU.

I'M SORRY, MARLENE ... DOCTOR ....

THANK YOU, LEINDAS. THANK YOU ....

IF I HAD WINGS ....

STRATOSPHERIC AIR CURRENT



HE CAN'T--

LOOKS LIKE A FOCKE-WULF! RELAX!

LONE ENEMY FIGHTER CLOSING FAST!!!

THAT PLANE! EVEN AT 10,000 METERS IT--

SHIT! I CAN'T SHAKE THIS GUY!!

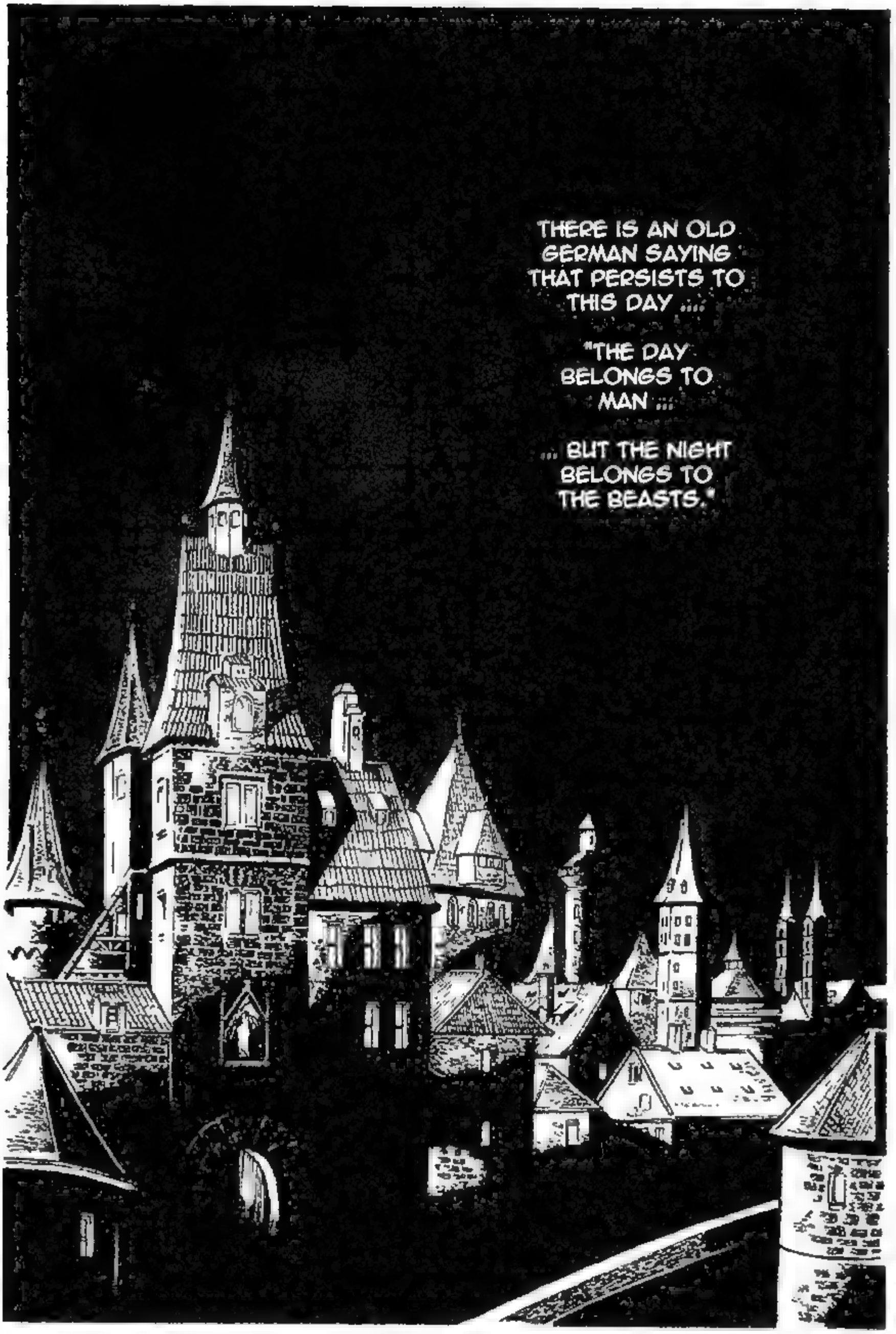
IF I HAD BEEN FLYING MY BELOVED OLD FOCKE-WULF FW-190, THERE WAS NO WAY I'D BE ABLE TO DO WHAT I DID TO THOSE THREE MK24 BRITISH SPITFIRES.

I HAD TO LET THEM DIE, UNDERSTAND? I HAD TO SIT BACK, DO NOTHING, AND WATCH BOTH OF THEM DIE.
MY NAME IS ERHART VON LEINDAS. I WAS ONCE A FIGHTER PILOT IN THE LUFTWAFFE BUT WAS COURT-MARTIALED FOR BEING A COWARD. THAT DOES NOT MATTER, THOUGH. I KNOW I DID THE RIGHT THING ... AND IN THE TIME FOLLOWING THE WAR MY CHOICE WAS PROVED RIGHT.

(Published in Big Comic Original, July 5, 1977 issue)

LEIJI
MATSUMOTO
PRESENTS

THE COCKPIT


THERE IS AN OLD GERMAN SAYING THAT PERSISTS TO THIS DAY ....
"THE DAY BELONGS TO MAN ...
... BUT THE NIGHT BELONGS TO THE BEASTS."

EYAGH!!

STUKA AT NIGHT

YOU PEOPLE NEVER LEARN, DO YOU? I DON'T NEED LIGHT TO GET YOU!
I'VE BEEN ABLE TO HIT A MARK IN THE DARK AT THE SLIGHTEST SOUND OR GLIMMER SINCE CHILDHOOD!
IT'S RUDE OF THEM TO KNOCK AT THIS HOUR.
DON'T THOSE BANDITS KNOW WE'RE CLOSED?

SO YOU WANNA THROW US DUDS?! HERE!! HAVE THE REAL THING!!!
THAT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN THAT AND IT WON'T BE THE LAST. OH HOW THEY HATE THAT!
AMERICANS MASS PRODUCE EVERYTHING. THAT'S WHY ALL OF IT IS CHEAP AND DOESN'T WORK HALF THE TIME.

THEN WE FIGHT TO THE END.

YOU KNOW WE'RE COMPLETELY SURROUNDED.

THEY'VE ALREADY STARTED THEIR ATTACK!

LET'S GIVE THEM A HAND! UP AND ATTACK!!

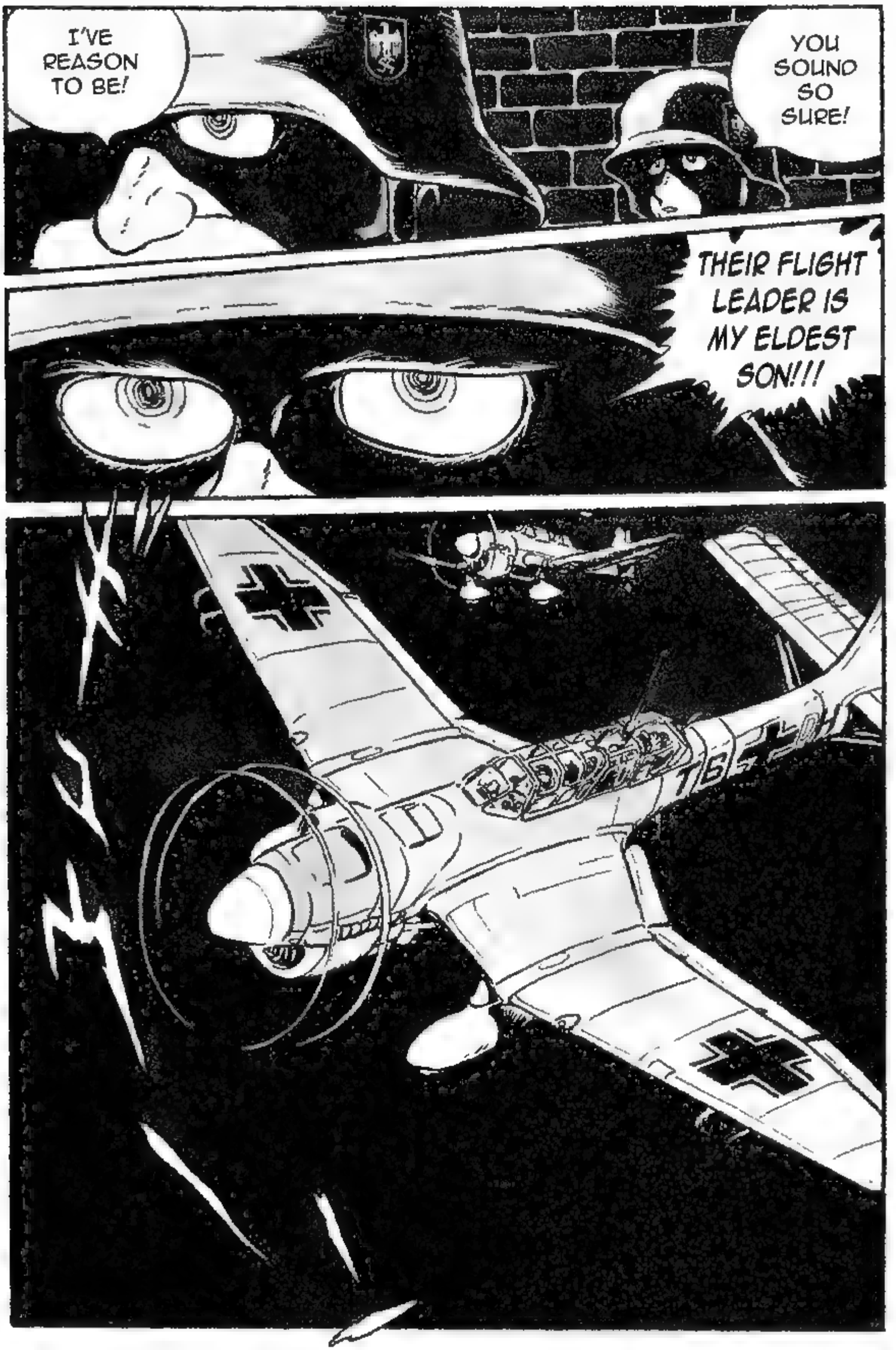
BUT IT'S SO DARK! HOW WILL THEY TELL FRIEND FROM FOE?

THEY'LL SEE! HAVE FAITH, MY FRIENDS! HAVE FAITH!!

DO YOU HEAR THAT, MEN? THAT'S HOPE!

THAT'S A JUNKERS ENGINE! THE STUKAS ARE COMING!

STUKA AT NIGHT


I'VE REASON TO BE!
YOU SOUND SO SURE!
THEIR FLIGHT LEADER IS MY ELDEST SON!!!

STUKA AT NIGHT

NO ENEMY PLANES IN SIGHT SO FAR, STAFFEL-KAPITAN!!

LEUTNANT BROCKHART! DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN!

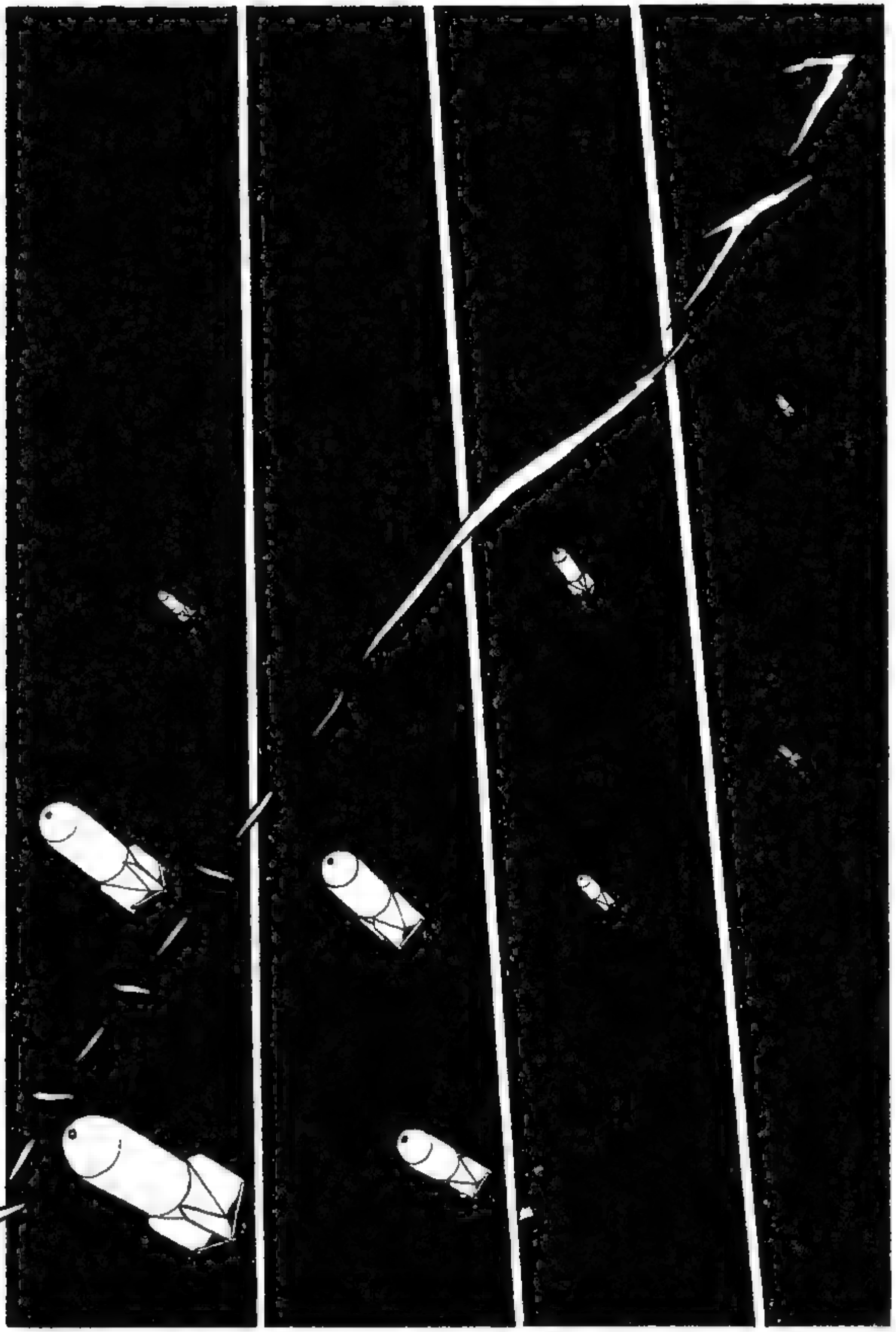
THE ALLIES HOLD EVERYTHING BEYOND THE CHURCH SPIRES! THAT IS OUR TARGET!

LOOK AHEAD! IT'S RAVENS-BRUCK!!

FOLLOW ME! I'LL SHOW THE WAY!! LET'S GO!!!

BUT IT'S SO DARK!

YOU CAME, MY SON. I'M SO PROUD OF YOU ....



STUKA AT NIGHT

WE GOT THE LOT. NO NEED TO HANG AROUND HERE.

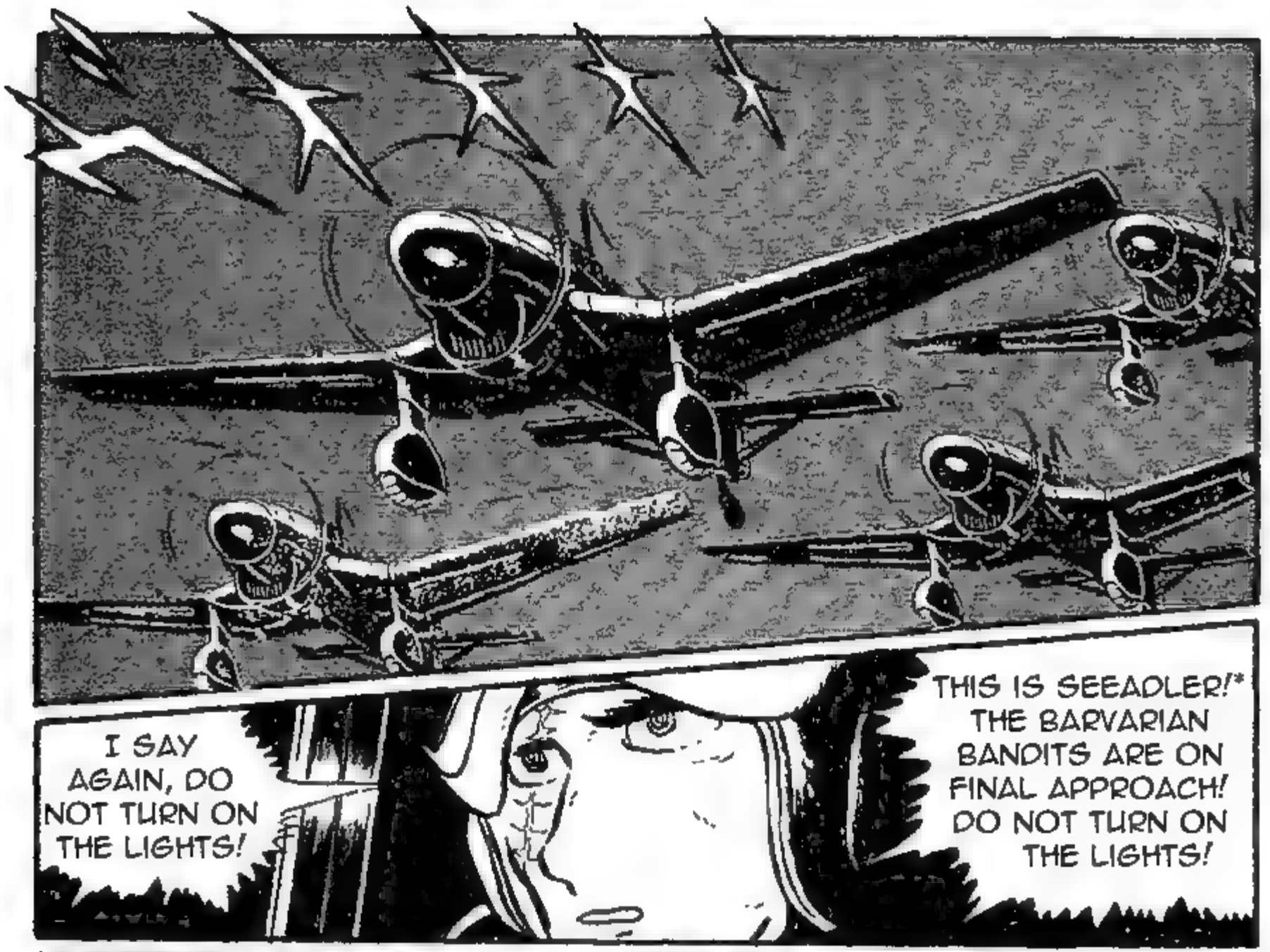
STILL NO ENEMY PLANES.

IF THERE ARE ANY, THEY'LL HEAD FOR RAVENSBRUCK AND WE'LL BE LONG GONE, LEUTNANT.

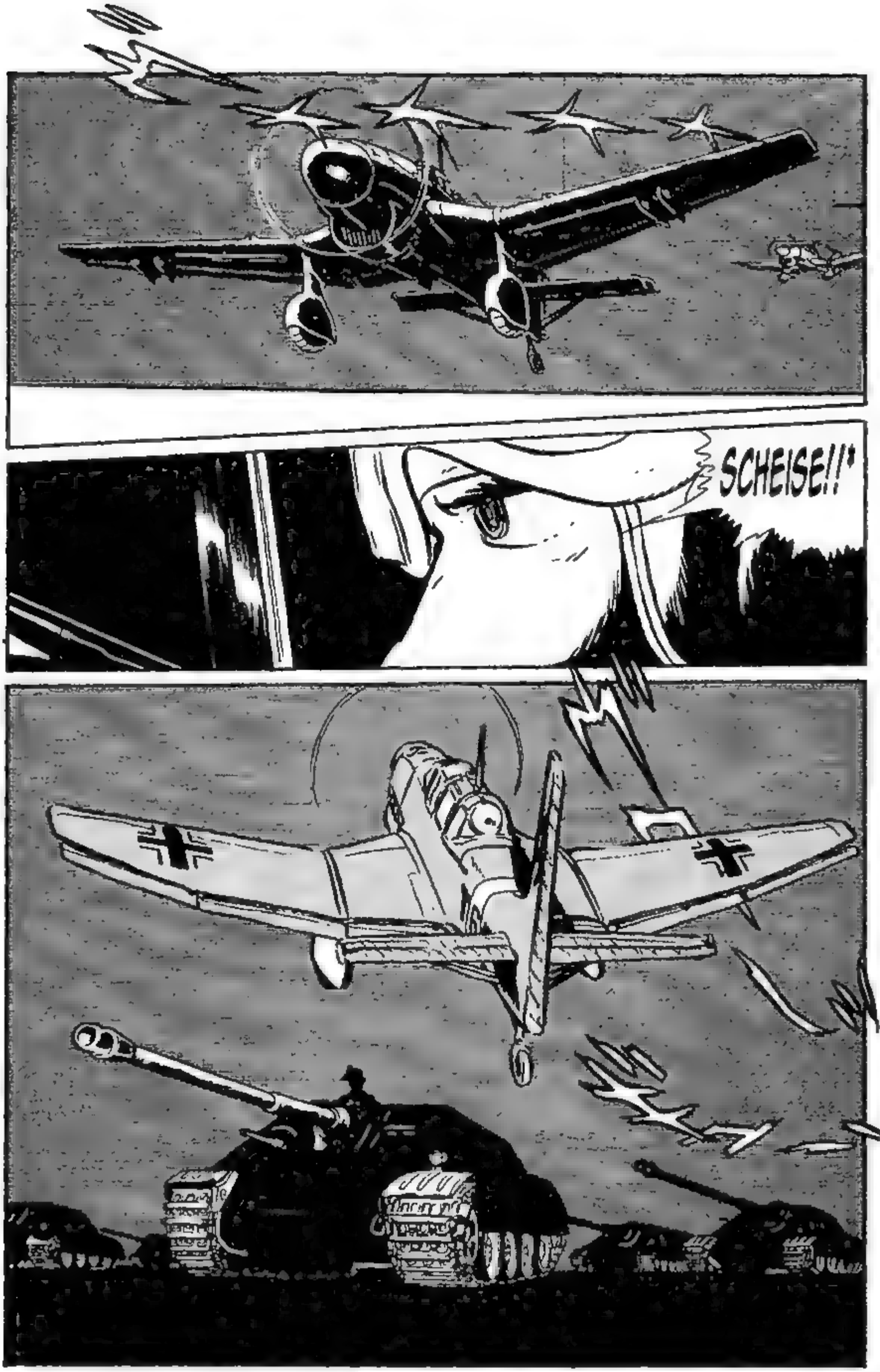
I GET NOTHING FROM THE GROUND.

THEY CAN TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES. NOW LET'S GO!

... MY SON ... SO PROUD ... SO ... ...

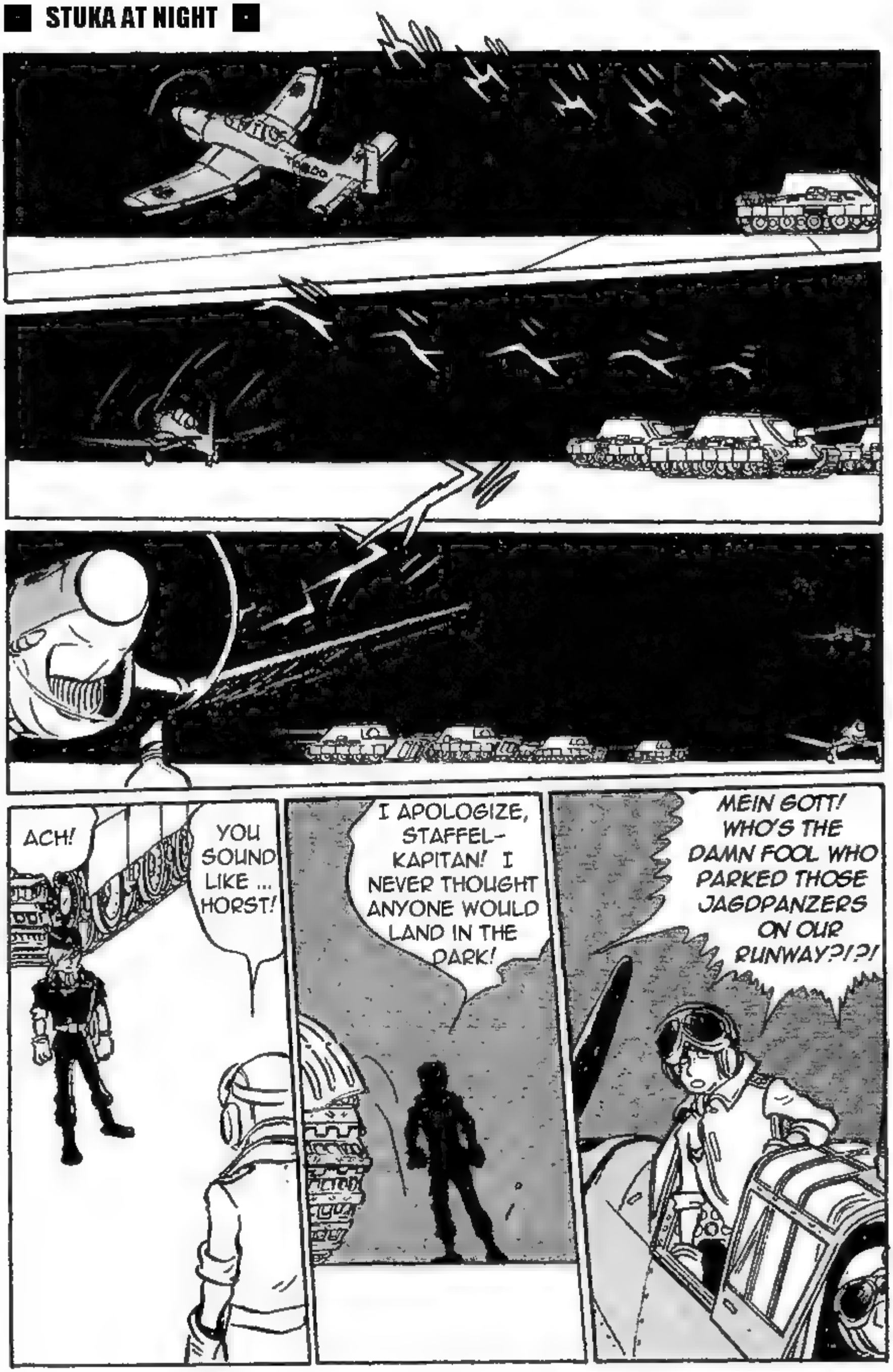

I SAY AGAIN, DO NOT TURN ON THE LIGHTS!
THIS IS SEEADLER!* THE BARVARIAN BANDITS ARE ON FINAL APPROACH! DO NOT TURN ON THE LIGHTS!
SEEADLER, WE HAVE YOU ON RADAR! YOU ARE ON COURSE!
THE BARVARIAN BANDITS CAN SEE IN THE DARK!
THOSE GUYS ARE CRAZY! NO LIGHTS?

(*) SEEADLER - DE. "SEA EAGLE"



(*) SCHEISE! - DE. "SHIT!" PRONOUNCED "SHY-SAH!"

STUKA AT NIGHT


ACH!
YOU SOUND LIKE ... HORST!
I APOLOGIZE, STAFFEL-KAPITAN! I NEVER THOUGHT ANYONE WOULD LAND IN THE DARK!
MEIN GOTT! WHO'S THE DAMN FOOL WHO PARKED THOSE JAGDPANZERS ON OUR RUNWAY?!?!

KURT! YOU'RE STILL ALIVE!

HORST! IT REALLY IS YOU!

BAD. WE HAD TO FIGHT OUR WAY THROUGH AN ENTIRE BATALLION OF YANKEE TANKS TO GET HERE.

SO HOW'S IT GOING, LITTLE BROTHER?

THE AMERICANS HELD EVERYTHING SOUTH OF THE OLD CHURCHES. WE LET THEM HAVE IT.

YOU BOMBED THE TOWN?

WE JUST CAME BACK FROM BOMBING RAVENSBRUCK.

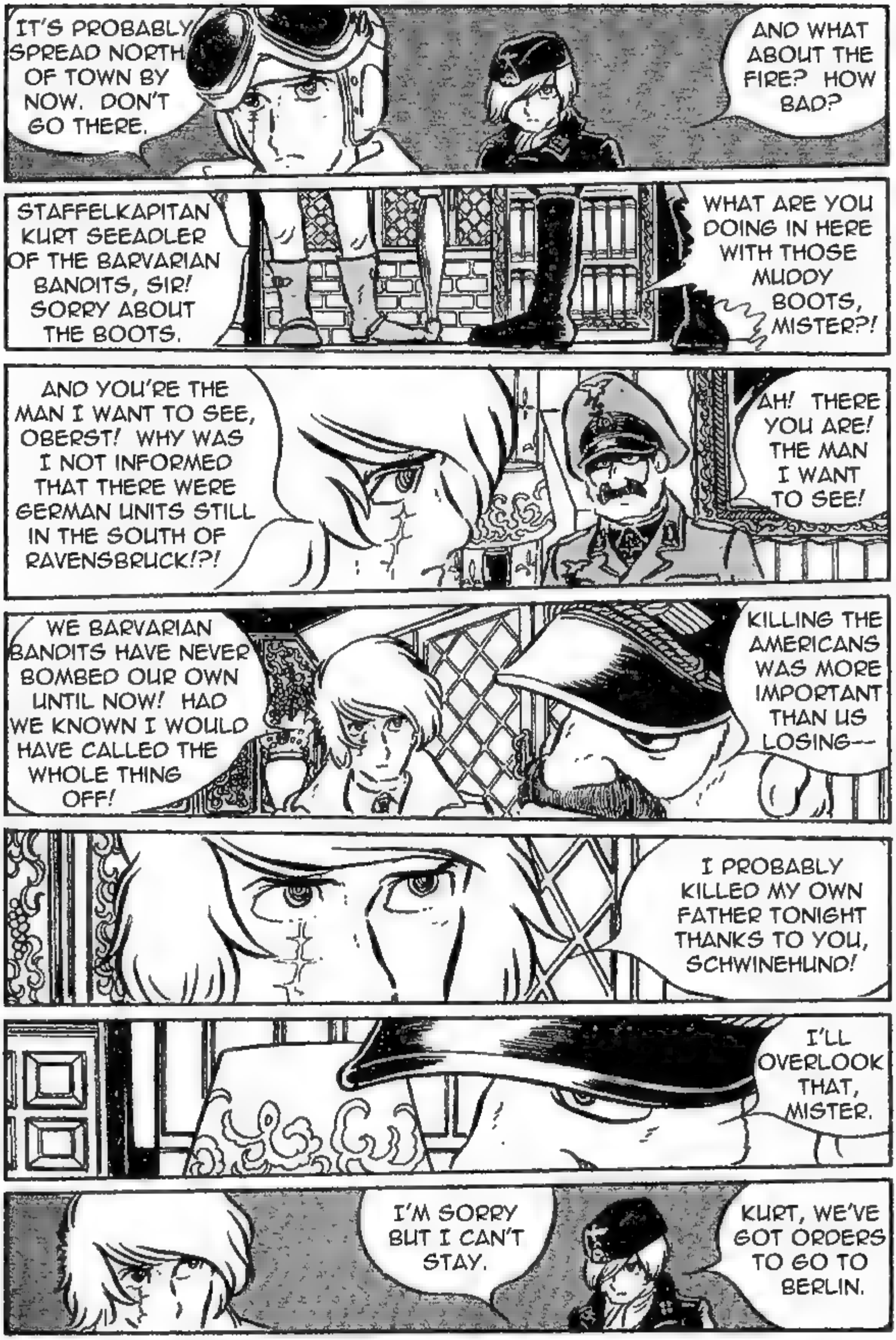
I HEARD THAT FATHER'S VOLKSTRUM UNIT WAS ISOLATED IN RAVENSBRUCK. HAVE YOU HEARD ANYTHING FROM THERE?

I SEE.

I ALSO MADE SURE NOT TO BOMB NORTH OF THE CHURCH LINE, WHERE I KNEW OUR FORCES WERE, SO MAYBE HE'S STILL ALIVE. I HOPE SO.

I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW IF FATHER GOT OUT WITH HIS UNIT, BUT YOU KNOW HOW TOUGH HE IS.

STUKA AT NIGHT


IT'S PROBABLY SPREAD NORTH OF TOWN BY NOW. DON'T GO THERE.
AND WHAT ABOUT THE FIRE? HOW BAD?
STAFFELKAPITAN KURT SEEADLER OF THE BARVARIAN BANDITS, SIR! SORRY ABOUT THE BOOTS.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE WITH THOSE MUDDY BOOTS, MISTER?!
AND YOU'RE THE MAN I WANT TO SEE, OBERST! WHY WAS I NOT INFORMED THAT THERE WERE GERMAN UNITS STILL IN THE SOUTH OF RAVENSBRUCK!?!
AH! THERE YOU ARE! THE MAN I WANT TO SEE!
WE BARVARIAN BANDITS HAVE NEVER BOMBED OUR OWN UNTIL NOW! HAD WE KNOWN I WOULD HAVE CALLED THE WHOLE THING OFF!
KILLING THE AMERICANS WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN US LOSING--
I PROBABLY KILLED MY OWN FATHER TONIGHT THANKS TO YOU, SCHWINEHUND!
I'LL OVERLOOK THAT, MISTER.
I'M SORRY BUT I CAN'T STAY.
KURT, WE'VE GOT ORDERS TO GO TO BERLIN.

DON'T YOU DIE ON ME EITHER, KURT! GIVE ... GIVE FATHER MY LOVE THE NEXT TIME YOU SEE HIM, OKAY?

DON'T DIE ON ME, YOU HEAR?

SORRY, HORST. BEST YOU NOT KNOW.

YES SIR.

... AND YOU DO WHAT YOU'VE GOT TO DO WITH WHAT YOU'VE GOT. UNDERSTAND?

I LET WHAT YOU SAID GO BECAUSE YOU'RE RIGHT. I AM A SCHWINEHUND, BUT THIS IS WAR ...

OUR HEART ISN'T IN IT ANYMORE. WE RUN ON IMPULSE.

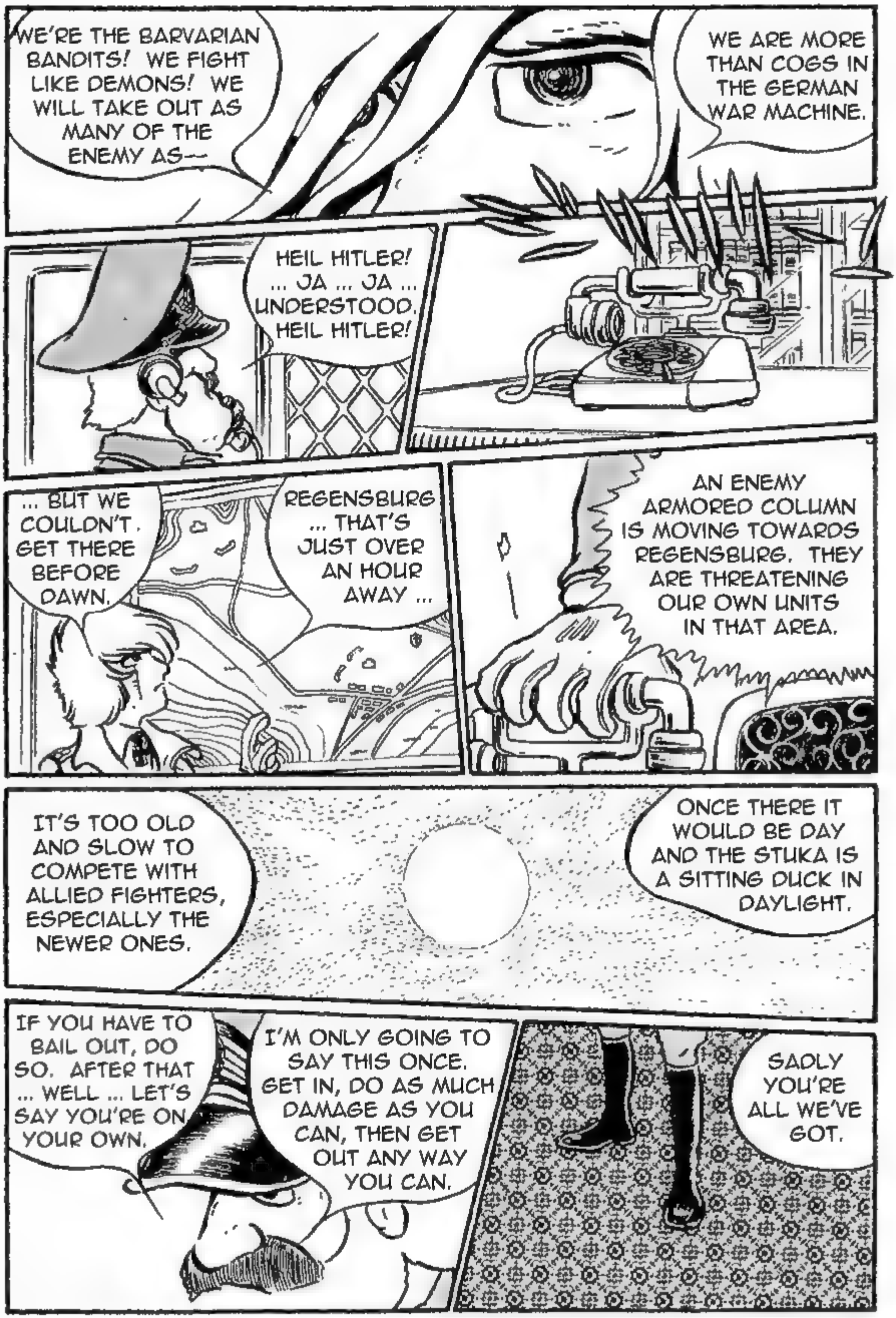
... BUT ARE NOW SCRAPING THE BARREL FOR WHATEVER LAST DREGS ARE LEFT TO SAVE OURSELVES.

TO THINK THAT WE ONCE HAD THE WORLD AT OUR FINGERTIPS ...

OF COURSE, SIR. AS FOR ME AND MY MEN WE STILL HAVE FIGHT IN US AND ARE GOING TO FIGHT!

YOU DIDN'T HEAR ME SAY ANY OF THAT, OF COURSE.

STUKA AT NIGHT


WE'RE THE BARVARIAN BANDITS! WE FIGHT LIKE DEMONS! WE WILL TAKE OUT AS MANY OF THE ENEMY AS--
WE ARE MORE THAN COGS IN THE GERMAN WAR MACHINE.
HEIL HITLER! ... JA ... JA ... UNDERSTOOD. HEIL HITLER!
... BUT WE COULDN'T GET THERE BEFORE DAWN.
REGENSBURG ... THAT'S JUST OVER AN HOUR AWAY ...
AN ENEMY ARMORED COLUMN IS MOVING TOWARDS REGENSBURG. THEY ARE THREATENING OUR OWN UNITS IN THAT AREA.
IT'S TOO OLD AND SLOW TO COMPETE WITH ALLIED FIGHTERS, ESPECIALLY THE NEWER ONES.
ONCE THERE IT WOULD BE DAY AND THE STUKA IS A SITTING DUCK IN DAYLIGHT.
IF YOU HAVE TO BAIL OUT, DO SO. AFTER THAT ... WELL ... LET'S SAY YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN.
I'M ONLY GOING TO SAY THIS ONCE. GET IN, DO AS MUCH DAMAGE AS YOU CAN, THEN GET OUT ANY WAY YOU CAN.
SADLY YOU'RE ALL WE'VE GOT.

THE WAR WILL BE OVER SOON, SO IF YOU DON'T ... WELL ... YOU KNOW.

IF YOU WANT TO COME BACK TO BARVARIA, YOU'LL PROBABLY HAVE TO WALK ALL THE WAY BACK.

IT IS, SEEADLER. BETTER GET GOING.

THANK YOU, SIR, AND IS THAT "ADVICE" GOOD FOR THE WHOLE UNIT?

JA WOHL, OBERST ADLER!

REMEMBER, IF YOU GET HIT THEN BAIL OUT. DON'T PLAY HERO! THE TIME FOR HEROES IS OVER!

I WISH WE COULD DO THIS AT NIGHT BUT WE HAVE OUR ORDERS. LET'S GET TO IT.

ABOUT TWO HOURS, SIR, BEST ESTIMATE.

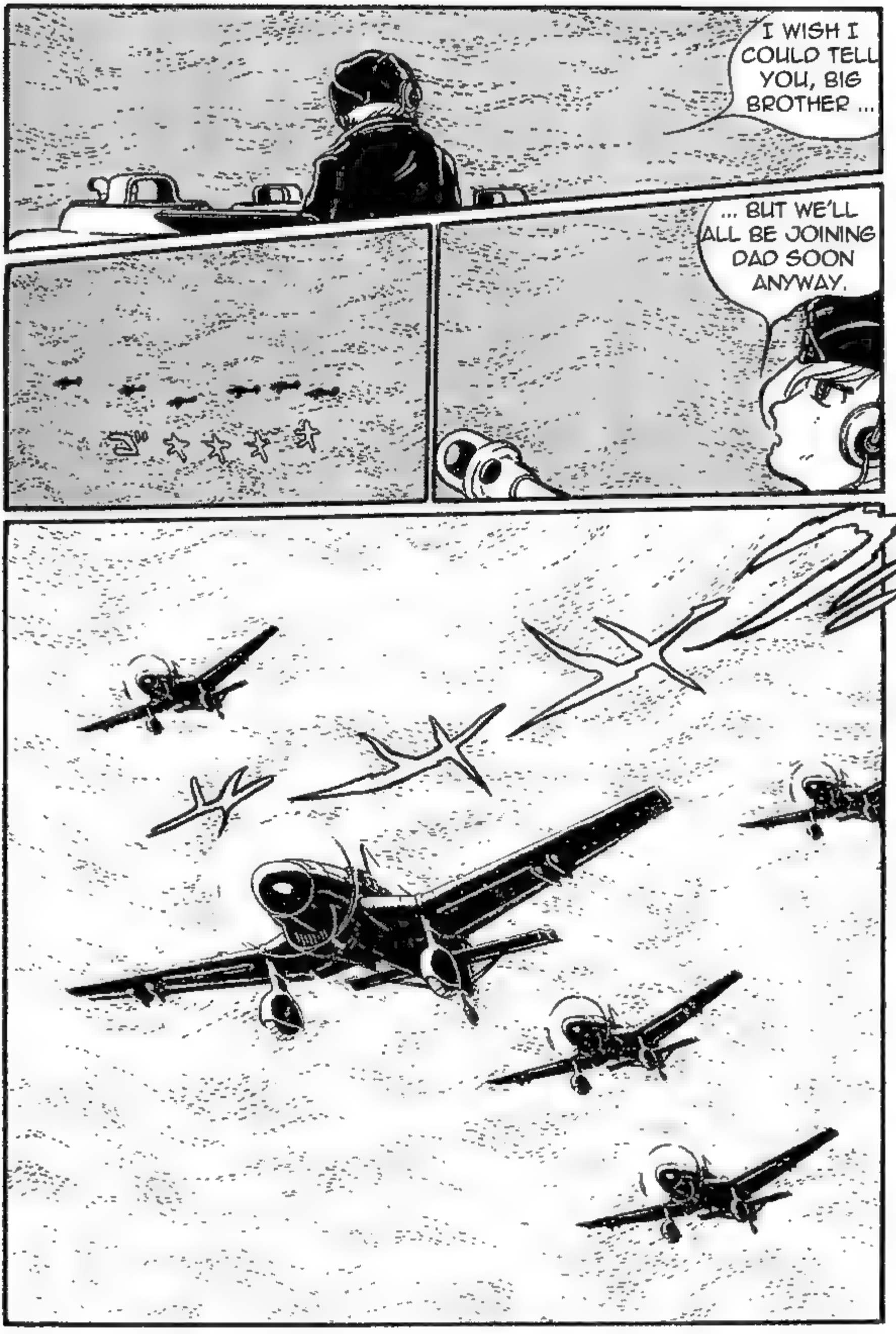
HOW MUCH TIME WILL WE HAVE BEFORE FULL DAYLIGHT?

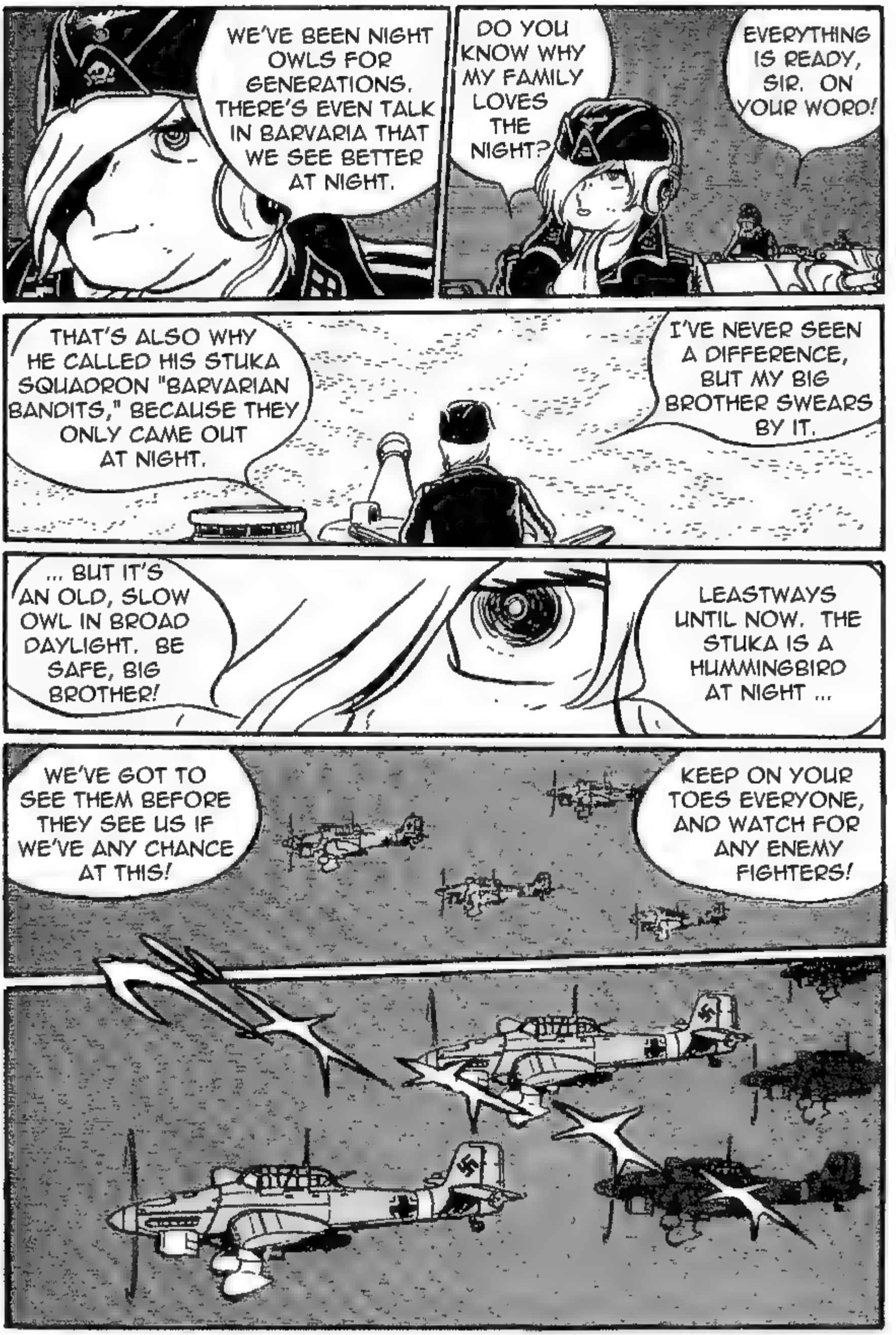
MY WHOLE FAMILY HAS BEEN LIKE THAT. COULD IT BE GENETIC?

TOO BAD. I ALWAYS SEE BETTER IN THE DARK THAN IN THE LIGHT.

MAYBE US NOT GETTING TO ATTACK AT NIGHT IS JUST ANOTHER SIGN THAT THE WAR IS OVER.

STUKA AT NIGHT




WE'VE BEEN NIGHT OWLS FOR GENERATIONS. THERE'S EVEN TALK IN BARVARIA THAT WE SEE BETTER AT NIGHT.
DO YOU KNOW WHY MY FAMILY LOVES THE NIGHT?
EVERYTHING IS READY, SIR. ON YOUR WORD!
THAT'S ALSO WHY HE CALLED HIS STUKA SQUADRON "BARVARIAN BANDITS," BECAUSE THEY ONLY CAME OUT AT NIGHT.
I'VE NEVER SEEN A DIFFERENCE, BUT MY BIG BROTHER SWEARS BY IT.
... BUT IT'S AN OLD, SLOW OWL IN BROAD DAYLIGHT. BE SAFE, BIG BROTHER!
LEASTWAYS UNTIL NOW. THE STUKA IS A HUMMINGBIRD AT NIGHT ...
WE'VE GOT TO SEE THEM BEFORE THEY SEE US IF WE'VE ANY CHANCE AT THIS!
KEEP ON YOUR TOES EVERYONE, AND WATCH FOR ANY ENEMY FIGHTERS!

STUKA AT NIGHT

IT WAS ONE OF THE MOST SPECTACULAR DIVE BOMBERS THEN, SIR.

I REMEMBER BACK AT THE START OF THE WAR, WHEN EVERYONE TRULY FEARED THE STUKA. THEY THOUGHT A PACK OF DEMONS WERE DESTROYING THEM!

IT WAS ALREADY OLD WHEN THE WAR BEGAN, BUT THE JAPANESE GAVE IT A REAL WORKOUT BEFORE IT BECAME OBSOLETE.

THE JAPANESE TYPE 99, ALLIED CODE NAME "VAL."

AS A MATTER OF FACT I'D ONLY RATE ONE OTHER BETTER THAN THE STUKA BACK THEN.

IT COMPARES WELL WITH THE STUKA IN MANY WAYS, AND LIKE WE DID THE JAPANESE FOUND NEW USES FOR IT ONCE IT WAS PAST ITS PRIME.

IT ALSO HELPED SINK THE AMERICAN FLEET AT PEARL HARBOR.

OF COURSE IT HAS THE SAME PROBLEM NOW AS THE STUKA DOES. IT CAN'T COMPETE WITH MODERN FIGHTERS.

THINGS ARE SO TOUGH THESE DAYS, NOW THAT EVERYONE HAS RADAR.

I WONDER IF THE JAPANESE EVER THOUGHT TO USE IT AS A NIGHT ATTACK AIRCRAFT.

THREE ENEMY AIRCRAFT AT THREE O'CLOCK OVER THE HIDA PLAIN, AND THEY'VE GOT RADAR! THAT MEANS WE'RE ONLY GOING TO GET ONE TRY AT THIS!

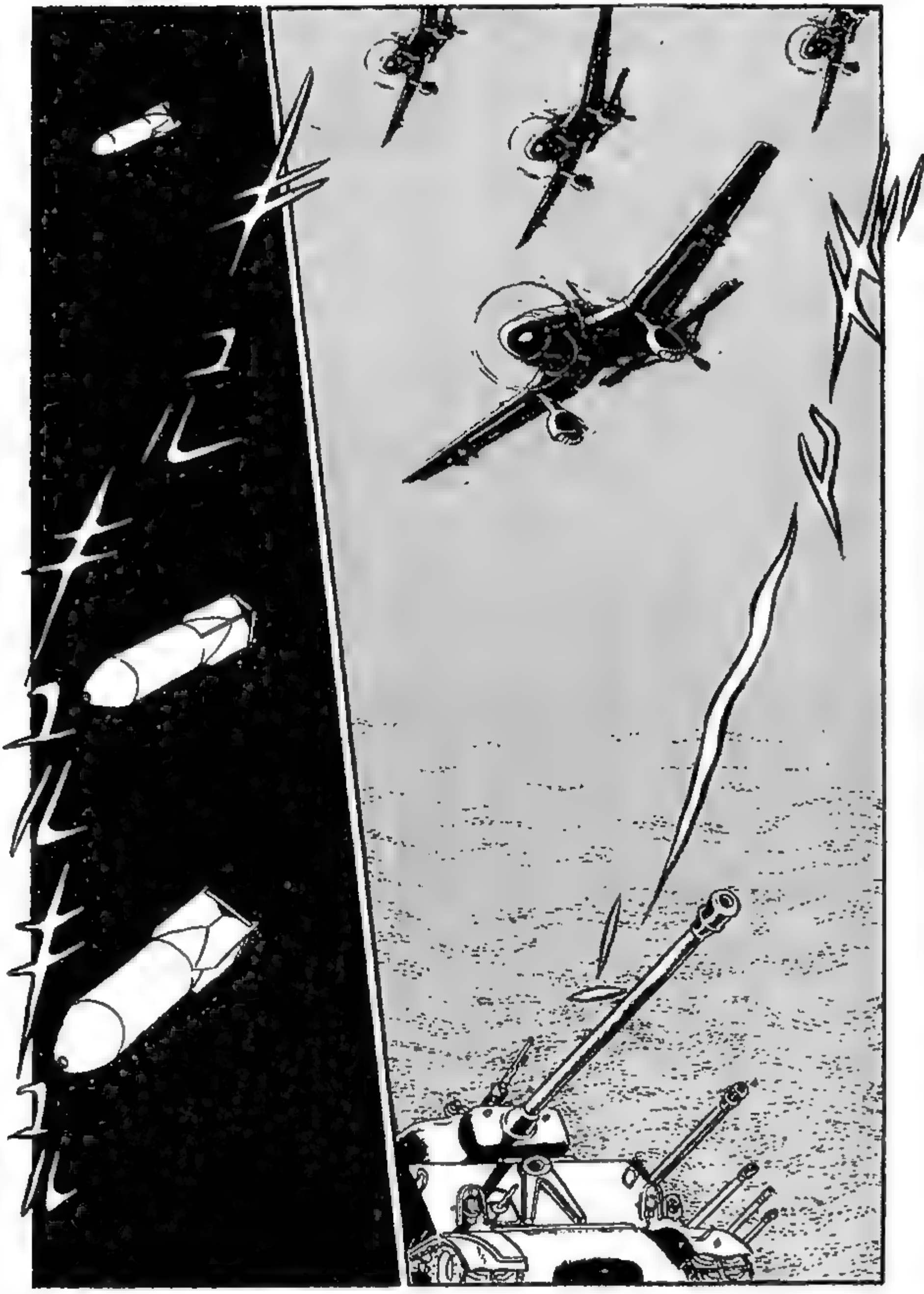
SCHIESE! WE'VE BEEN PAINTED!*

WE SHOULD BE SEEING THEM ANY TIME NOW!

COMING AROUND THE RIGHT FLANK OF THE MOUNTAINS!

THERE THEY ARE! LET'S GO!!

(*) "WE'VE BEEN PAINTED!" - SERVICE SLANG FOR SOMEONE GETTING A RADAR LOCK ON YOU.

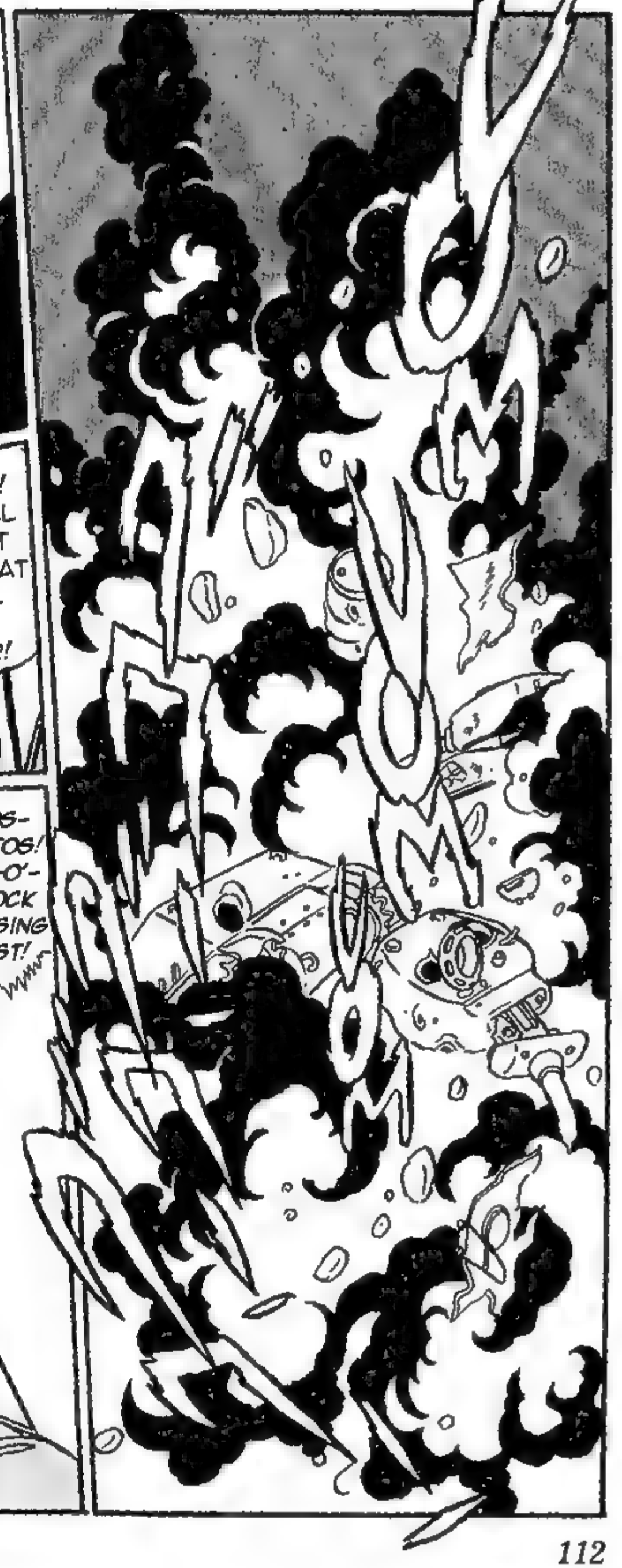


NOW LET'S --

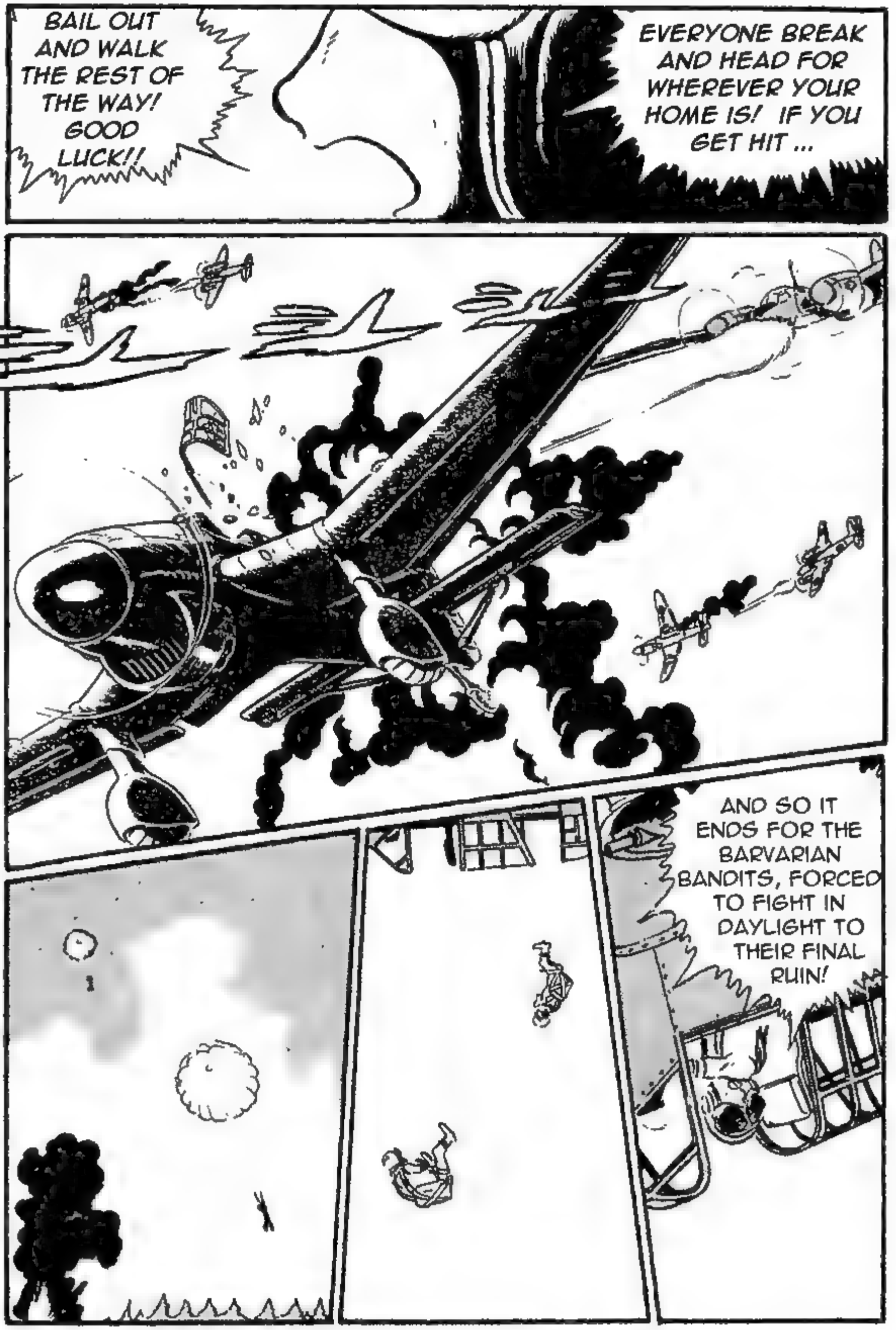
LOOK AT 'EM BURN!!! WELL DONE!!!

DAMN! THE SUN! ALL RIGHT! JUST REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD ALL OF YOU EARLIER!

MOS-QUITOS! SIX-O'-CLOCK CLOSING FAST!



STUKA AT NIGHT


BAIL OUT AND WALK THE REST OF THE WAY! GOOD LUCK!!
EVERYONE BREAK AND HEAD FOR WHEREVER YOUR HOME IS! IF YOU GET HIT ...
AND SO IT ENDS FOR THE BARVARIAN BANDITS, FORCED TO FIGHT IN DAYLIGHT TO THEIR FINAL RUIN!

OH, SCHIESE.

YEAH, BUT DO WE DO TO THEM WHAT THEY DID TO US AT MALMEDY?*

THE C.O.'S BROTHER GOT KILLED IN THAT BOMBING.

THAT'S PRETTY COLD, ORDERING US TO SHOOT ALL GERMANS ON SIGHT.

!!

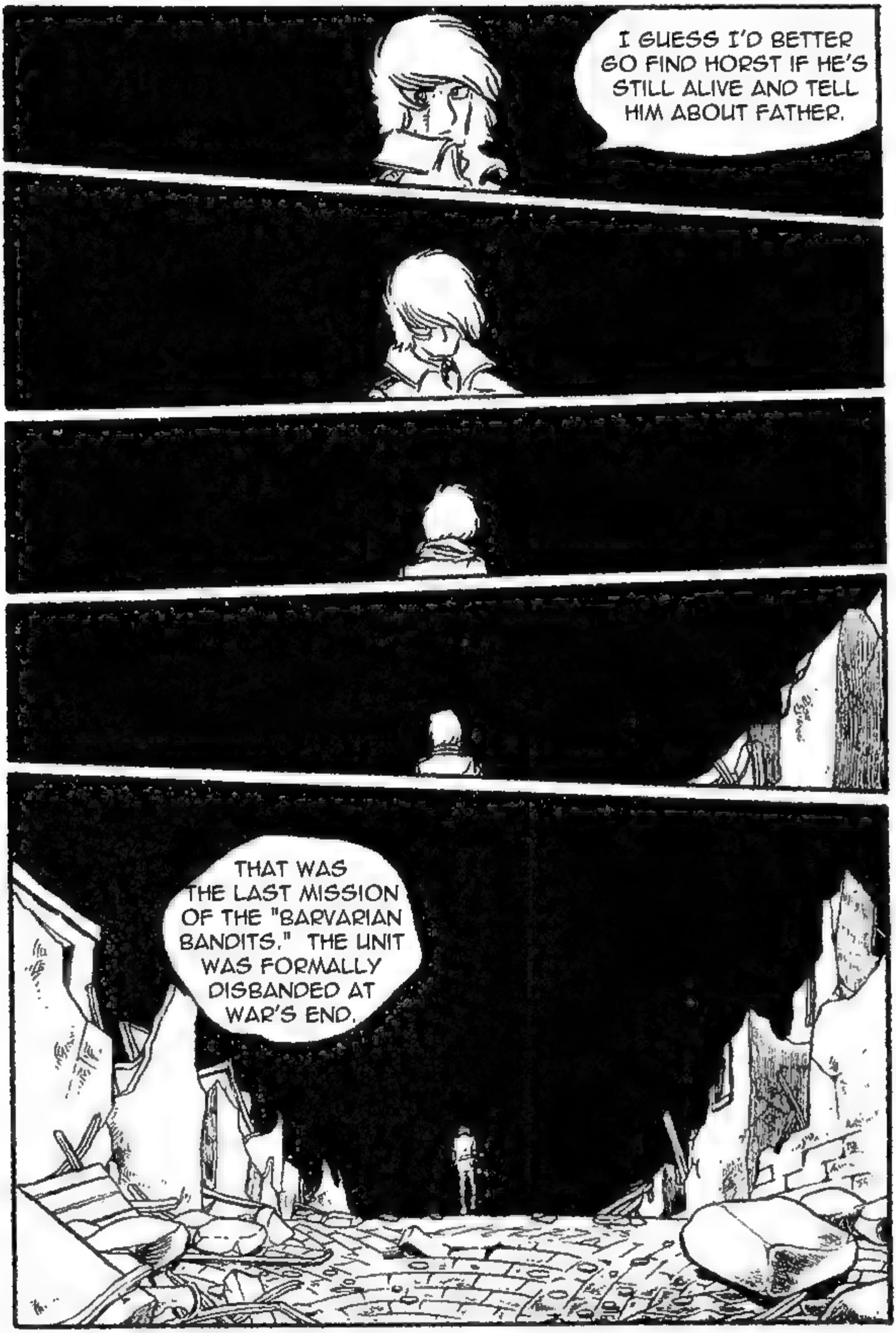
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE BETTER THAN THAT! I TELL YOU WHAT, THAT'S ONE ORDER I'M NOT FOLLOWING! IT'S NOT RIGHT!!

WELL, WELL ...

THEN I'LL TAKE IT TO THE GENERAL! IT'S AN UNLAWFUL ORDER!

YOU KNOW WHAT THE C.O. WILL DO IF HE FINDS--

(*) ON 17 DECEMBER 1944, 84 AMERICAN SOLDERS AND MEDICS IN FULL UNIFORM WERE MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD BY A WAFFEN S.S. UNIT AT MALMEDY, FRANCE. IT WAS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE GREATEST CRIMES COMMITTED BY THE GERMANS DURING THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE.


I GUESS I'D BETTER GO FIND HORST IF HE'S STILL ALIVE AND TELL HIM ABOUT FATHER.
THAT WAS THE LAST MISSION OF THE "BARVARIAN BANDITS." THE UNIT WAS FORMALLY DISBANDED AT WAR'S END.

BARVARIA'S SEEADLER FAMILY WAS ONE OF MANY OF GERMAN'S ARISTOCRACY THAT PERISHED DURING THE WAR.
EVEN SO, IT IS SAID YOU CAN STILL HEAR OWLS FLYING IN THE NIGHT IN THE FORESTS OF THEIR FORMER ESTATE GROUNDS.
DAS ENDE

STUKA AT NIGHT

<Published in Big Comic Original, May 5, 1977 issue>

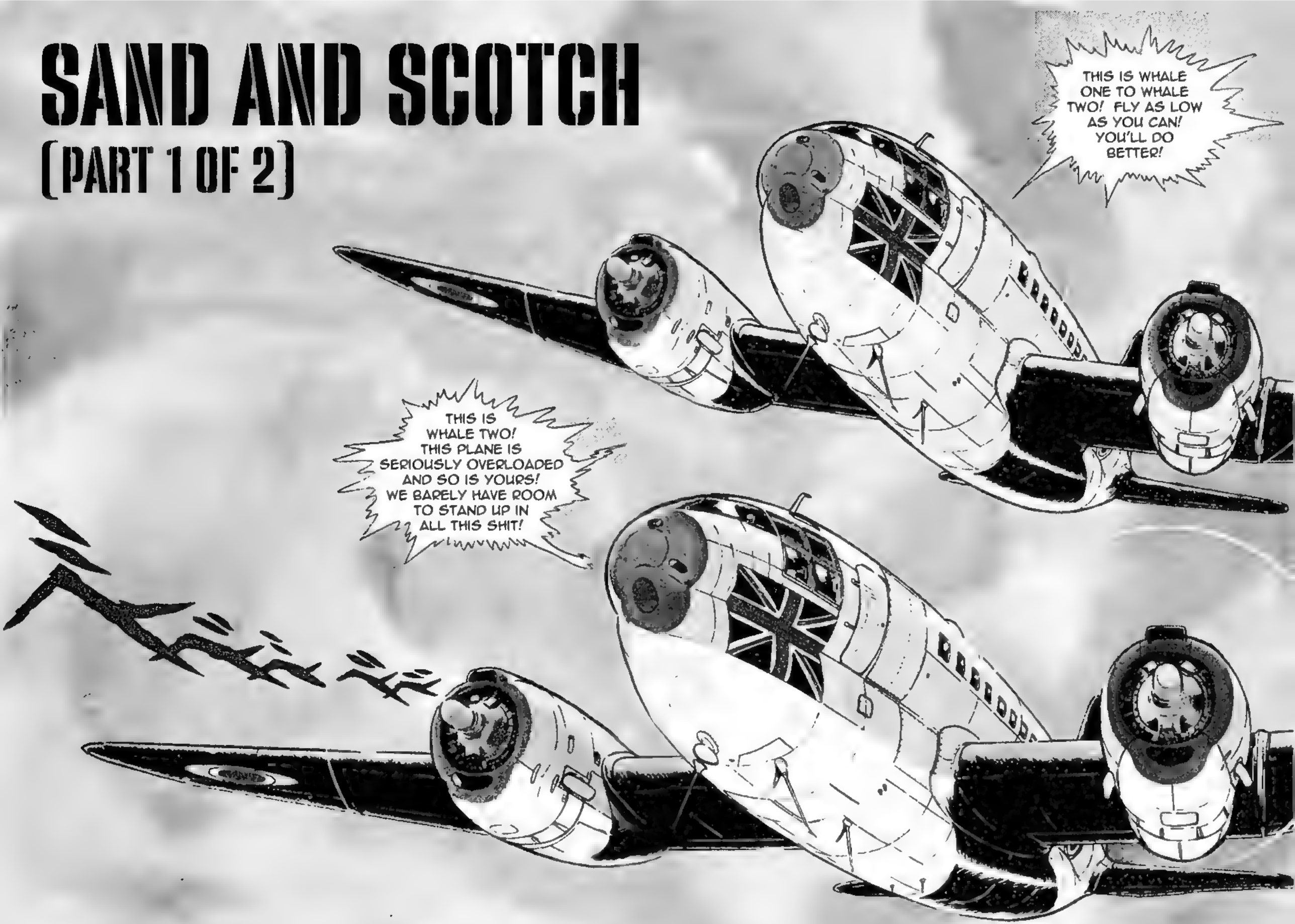
LEIJI
MATSUMOTO
PRESENTS

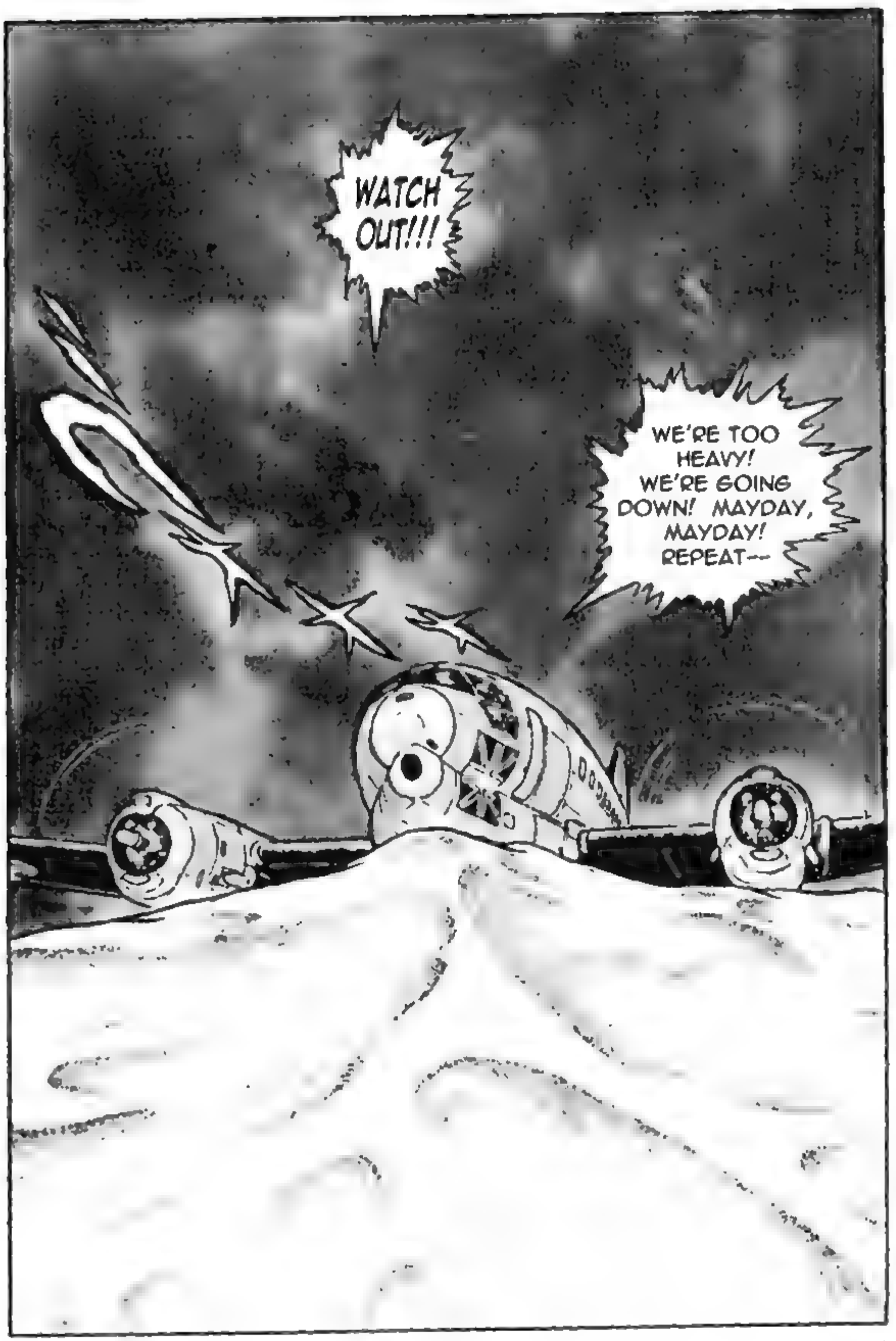
THE COCKPIT

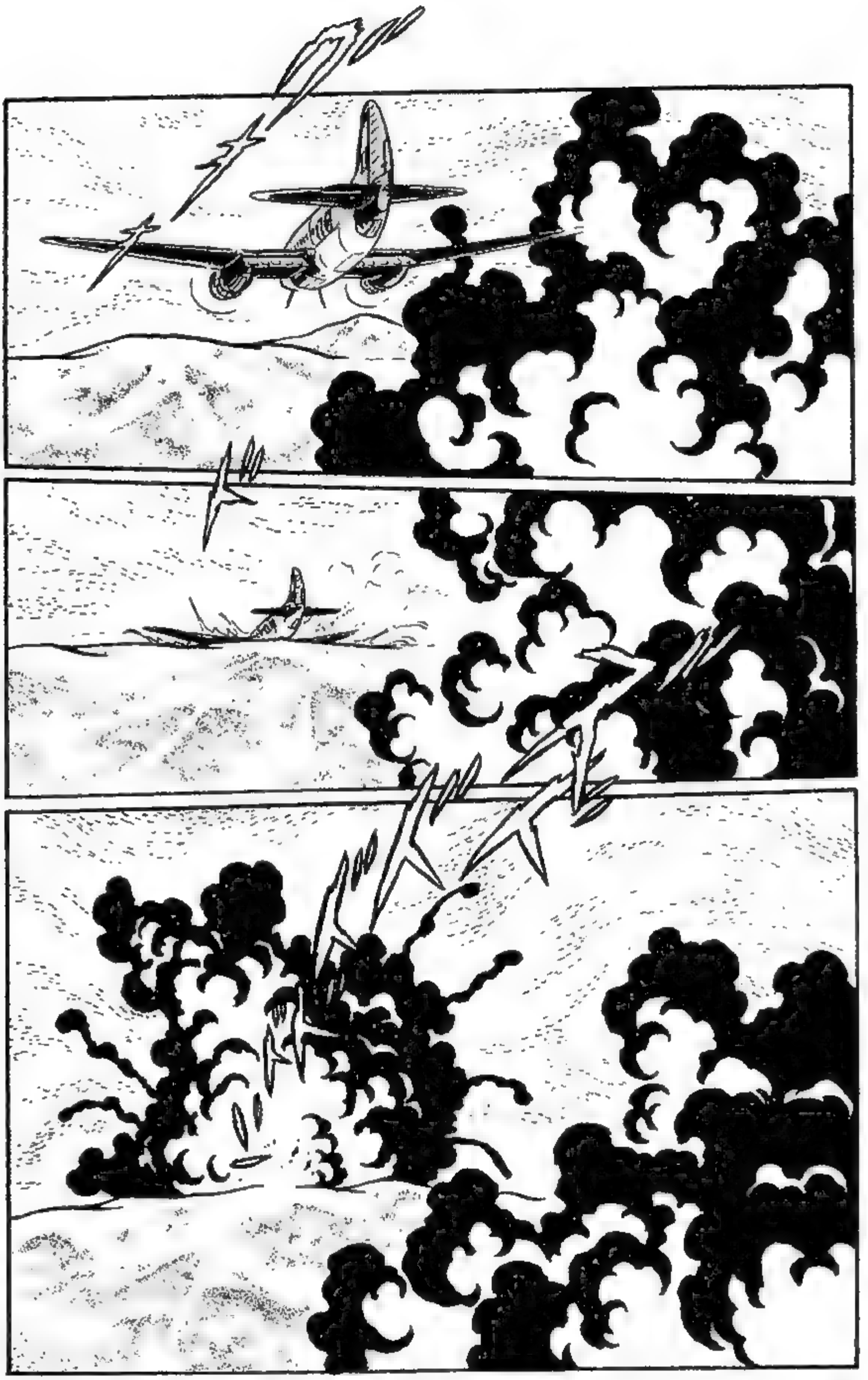
SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 1 of 2)

WASTE AND EXCESS ARE SIMPLE CONCEPTS, AND YET BOTH HUMAN AND MACHINES OFTEN HAVE TROUBLE GRASPING THEM.
IVAN IVANOVICH DOGOROVSKY, RUSSIAN EXPLORER, LOST IN THE AMAZON WITH A BOTTLE OR VODKA, 1842.
EXTRA SPECIAL

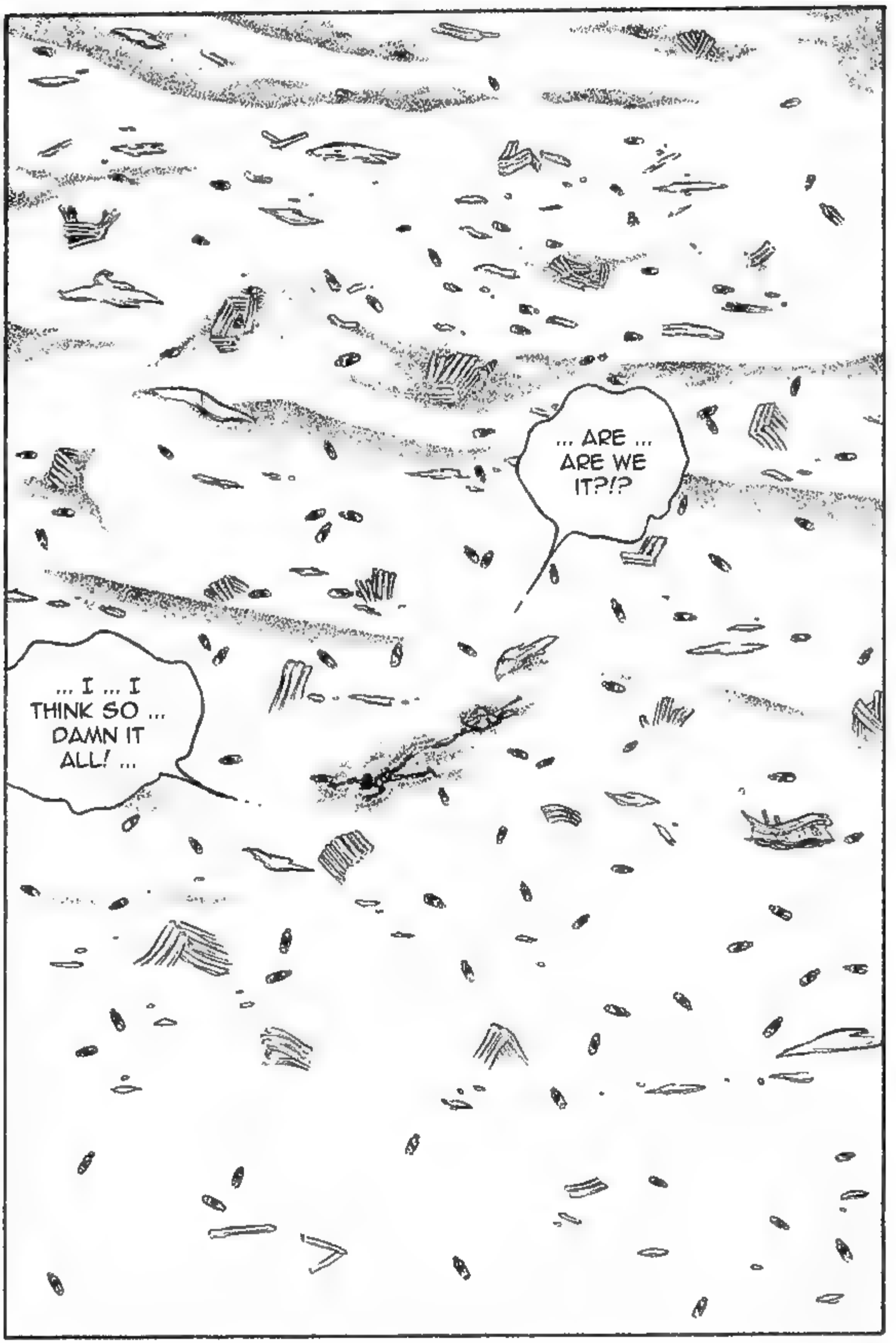
SAND AND SCOTCH
(PART 1 OF 2)


THIS IS WHALE ONE TO WHALE TWO! FLY AS LOW AS YOU CAN! YOU'LL DO BETTER!
THIS IS WHALE TWO! THIS PLANE IS SERIOUSLY OVERLOADED AND SO IS YOURS! WE BARELY HAVE ROOM TO STAND UP IN ALL THIS SHIT!

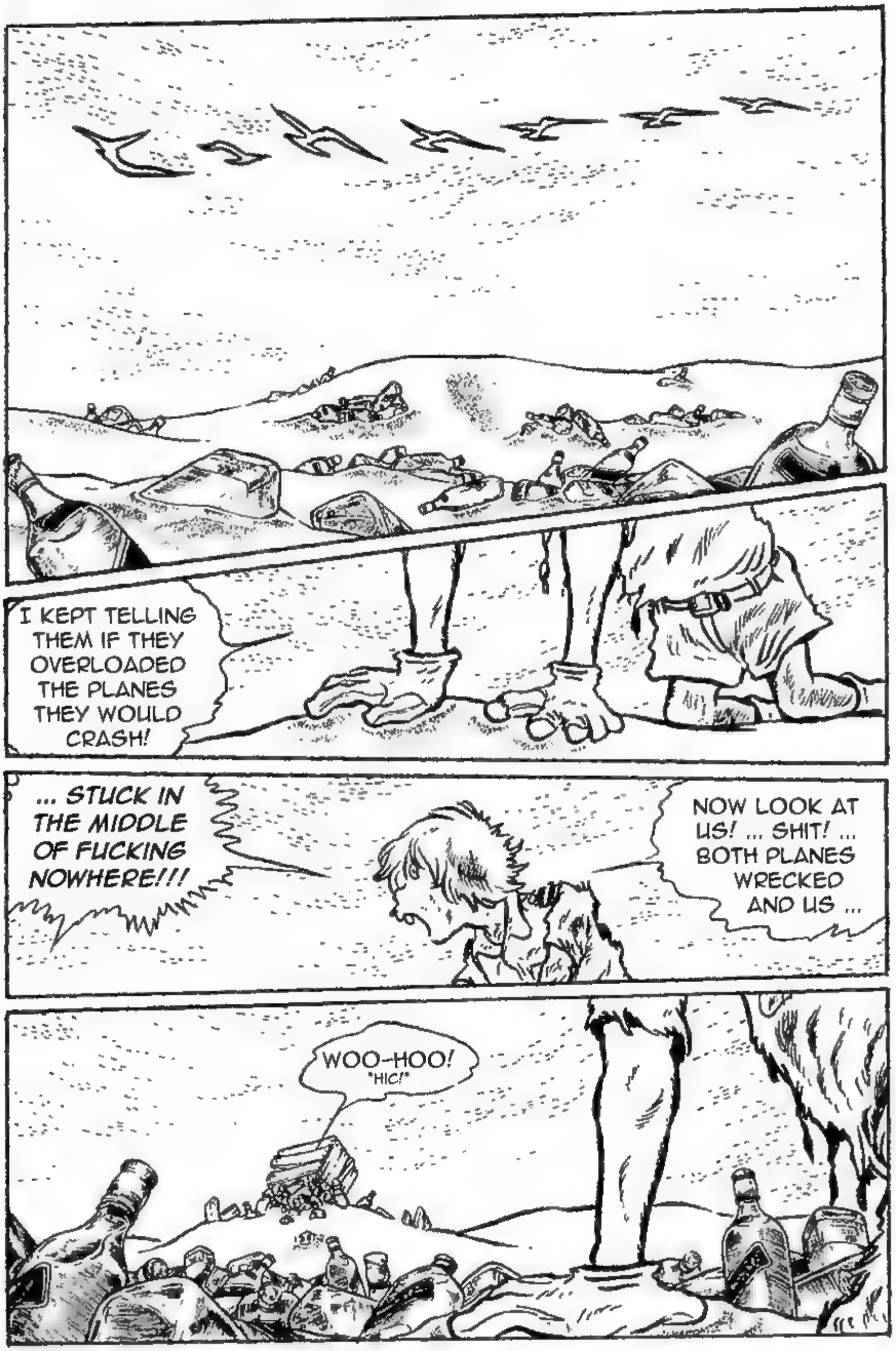

WATCH OUT!!!
WE'RE TOO HEAVY! WE'RE GOING DOWN! MAYDAY, MAYDAY! REPEAT--

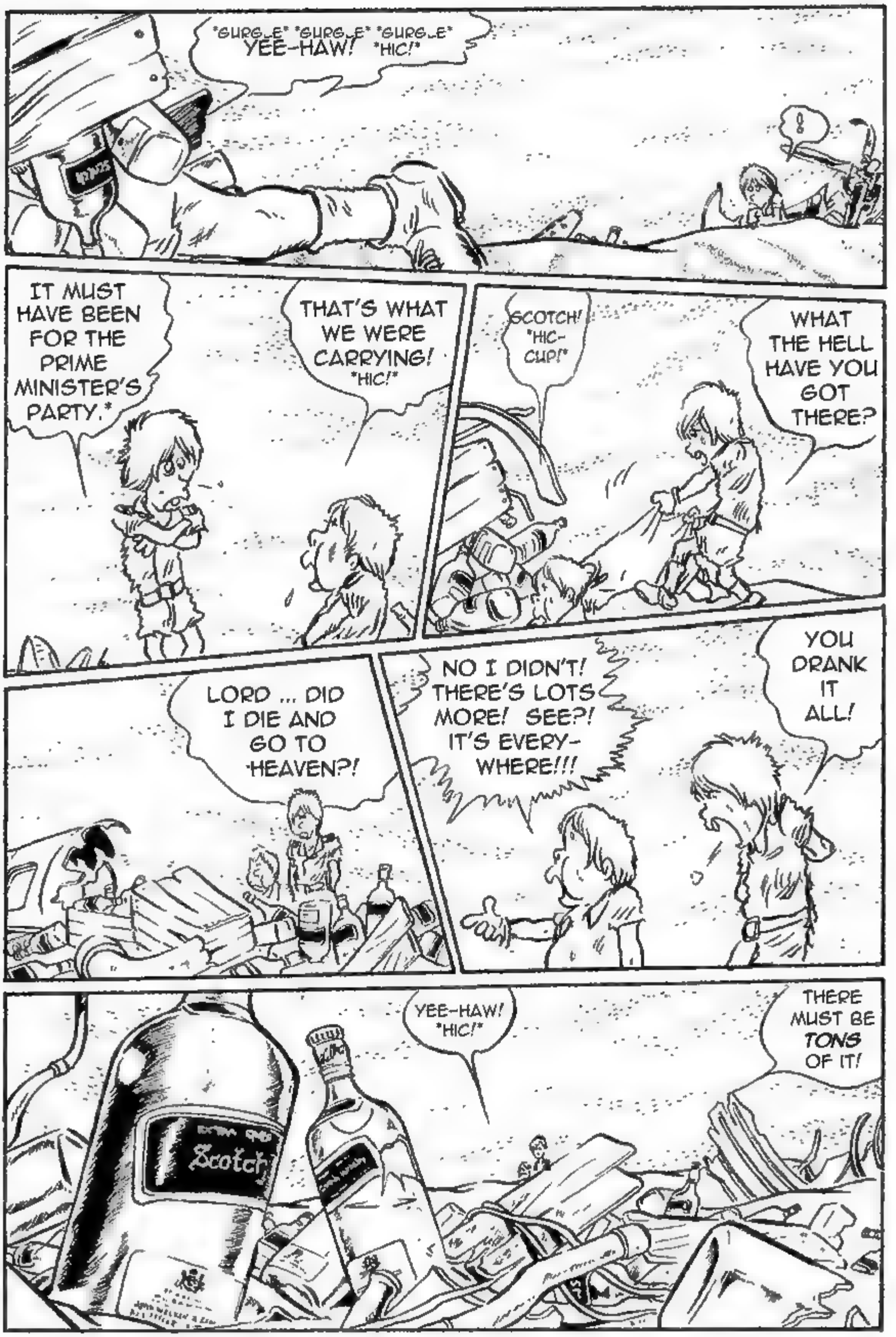


SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 1 of 2)


... ARE ... ARE WE IT?!?
... I ... I THINK SO ... DAMN IT ALL! ...

SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 1 of 2)

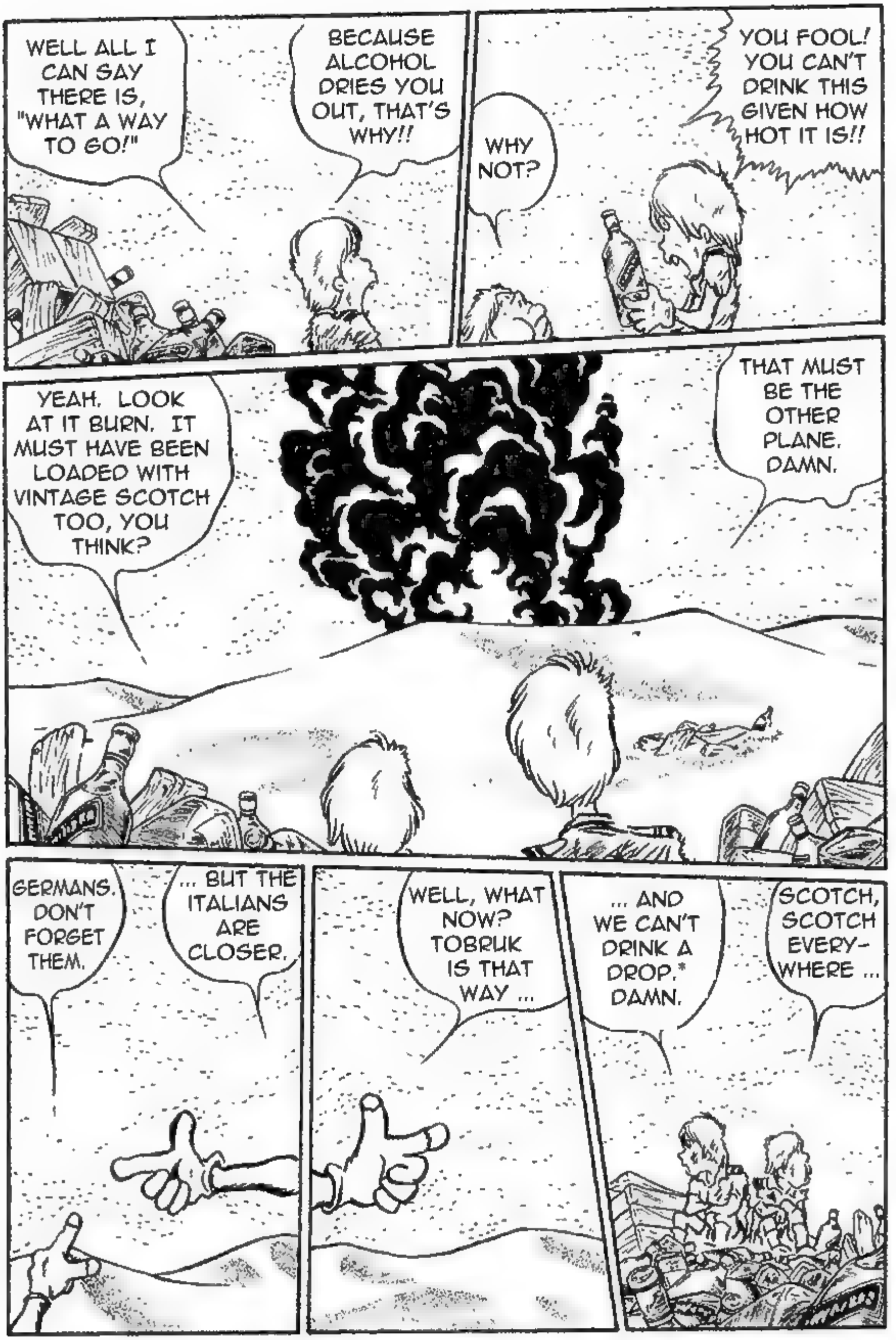

I KEPT TELLING THEM IF THEY OVERLOADED THE PLANES THEY WOULD CRASH!
... STUCK IN THE MIDDLE OF FUCKING NOWHERE!!!
NOW LOOK AT US! ... SHIT! ... BOTH PLANES WRECKED AND US ...
WOO-HOO!
"HIC!"


GURGLE *GURGLE* *GURGLE*
YEE-HAW! *HIC!*
!
IT MUST HAVE BEEN FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S PARTY.*
THAT'S WHAT WE WERE CARRYING! *HIC!*
SCOTCH! *HIC-CUP!*
WHAT THE HELL HAVE YOU GOT THERE?
LORD ... DID I DIE AND GO TO HEAVEN?!
NO I DIDN'T! THERE'S LOTS MORE! SEE?! IT'S EVERY-WHERE!!!
YOU DRANK IT ALL!
YEE-HAW! *HIC!*
THERE MUST BE *TONS* OF IT!
Scotch

(*) AS IN "PRIME MINISTER'S ENTOURAGE." THE ORIGINAL JAPANESE TEXT SEEMS TO IMPLY THE DOUBLE SHIPMENT OF SCOTCH WAS INTENDED FOR SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL'S APPEARANCE AT THE CASABLANCA CONFERENCE, 11-12 JANUARY 1943. JOHNNIE WALKER SCOTCH WHISKEY WAS ONE OF HIS FAVORITE LIQUORS.

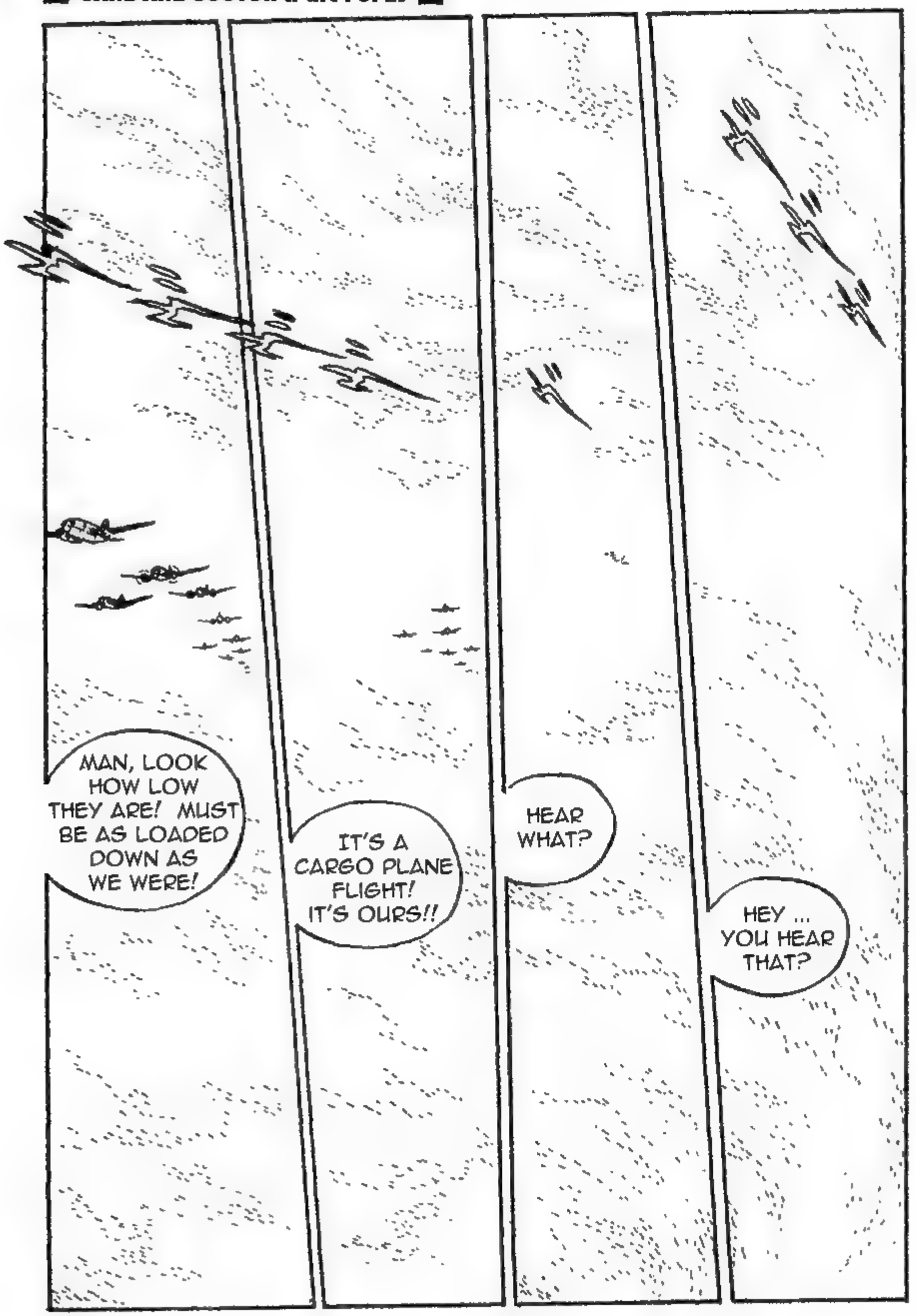
SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 1 of 2)

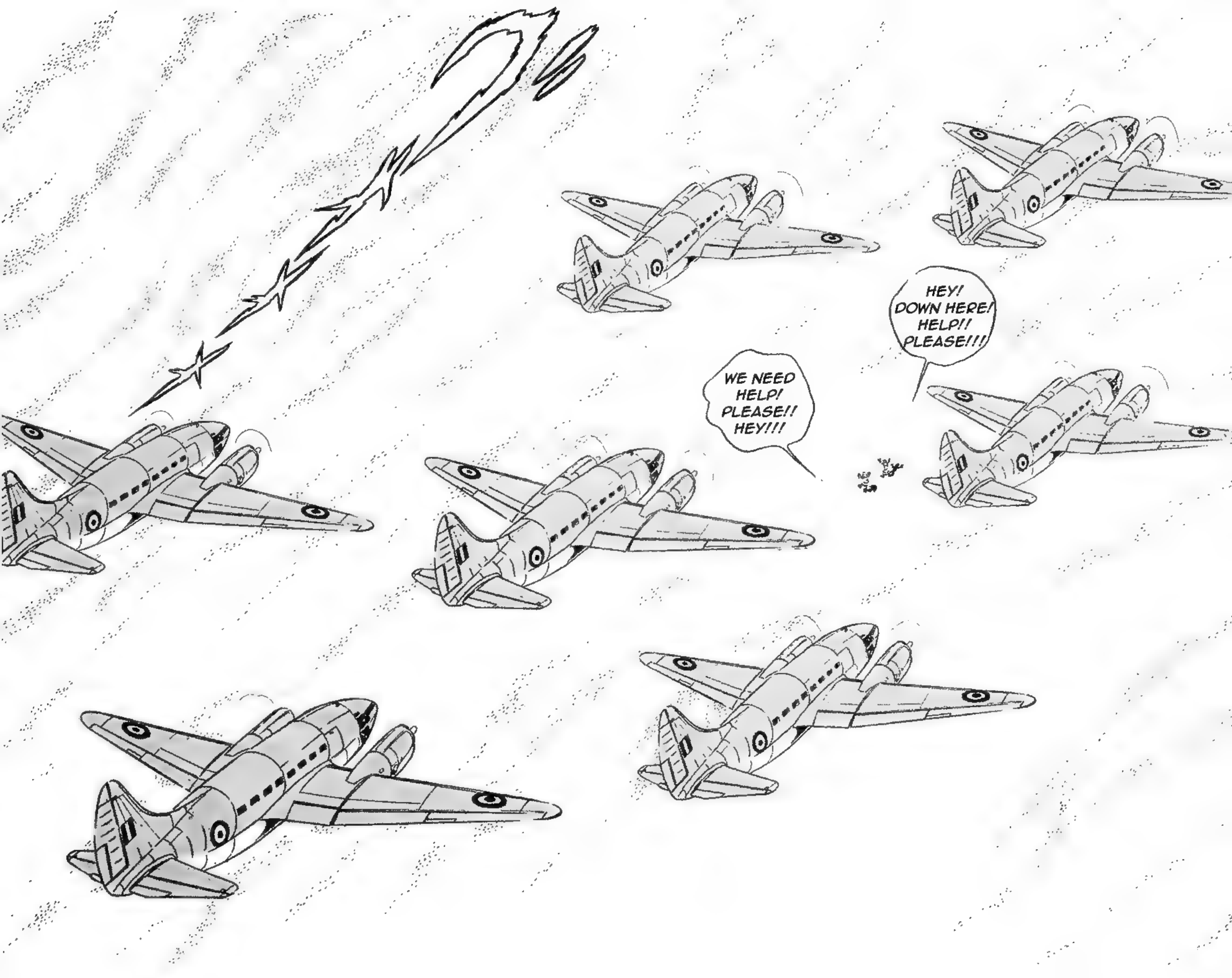
TOO BAD A LOT OF IT BROKE IN THE CRASH.
BUT THERE'S STILL PLENTY LEFT!! OH MAN, WE ARE GONNA DRROOWWNN IN GOOD SCOTCH!!!
SPECIAL
Scotch


WELL ALL I CAN SAY THERE IS, "WHAT A WAY TO GO!"
BECAUSE ALCOHOL DRIES YOU OUT, THAT'S WHY!!
WHY NOT?
YOU FOOL! YOU CAN'T DRINK THIS GIVEN HOW HOT IT IS!!
YEAH. LOOK AT IT BURN. IT MUST HAVE BEEN LOADED WITH VINTAGE SCOTCH TOO, YOU THINK?
THAT MUST BE THE OTHER PLANE. DAMN.
GERMANS. DON'T FORGET THEM.
... BUT THE ITALIANS ARE CLOSER.
WELL, WHAT NOW? TOBRUK IS THAT WAY ...
... AND WE CAN'T DRINK A DROP.* DAMN.
SCOTCH, SCOTCH EVERY-WHERE ...

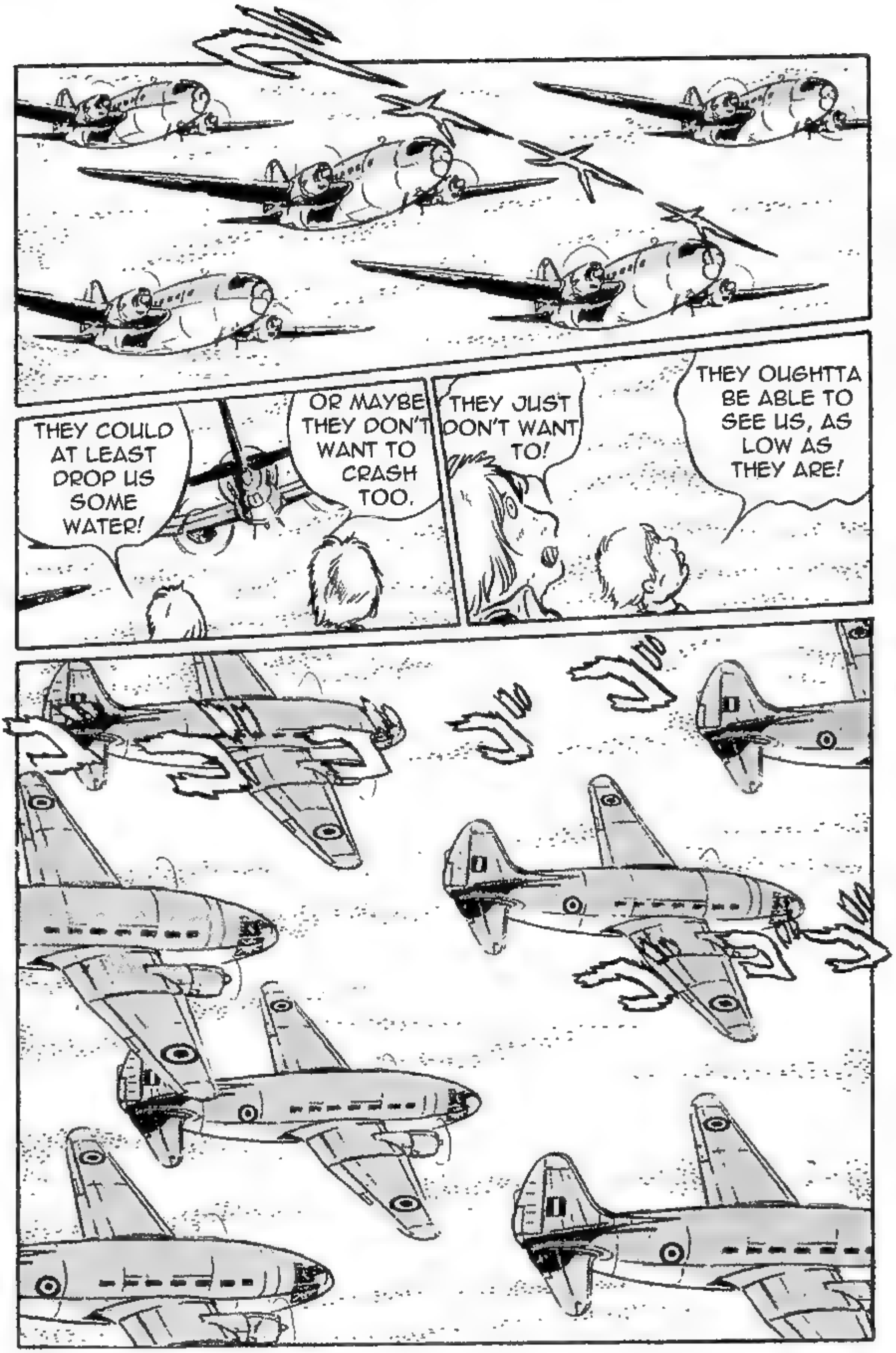
(*) THIS IS A WORDPLAY OF MINE ON A FAMOUS LINE FROM THE POEM "THE RHYME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER" BY SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. YOU MIGHT REMEMBER IT: "WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE / NOT A DROP TO DRINK." (R.M.)

SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 1 of 2)



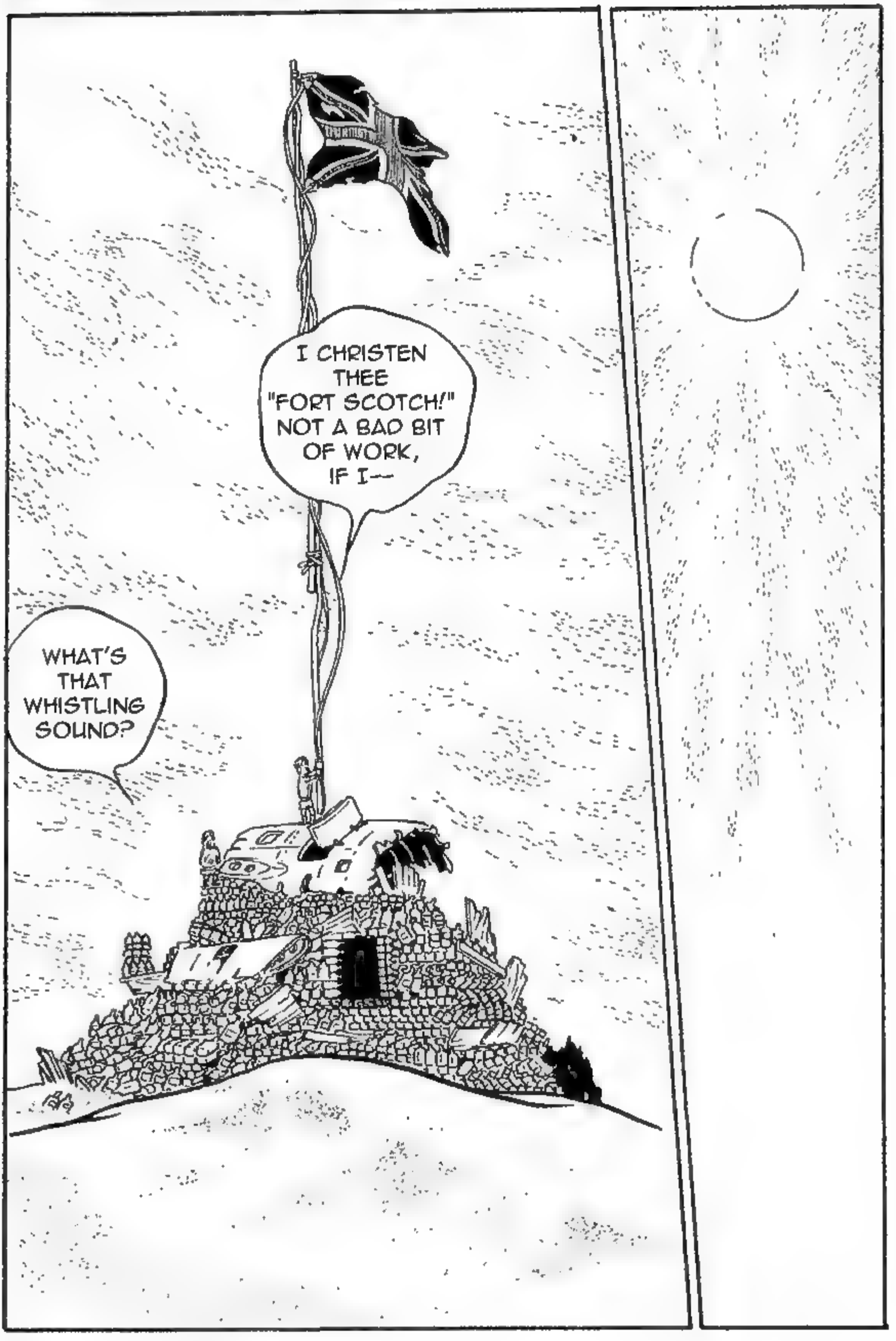

HEY!
DOWN HERE!
HELP!!
PLEASE!!!
WE NEED
HELP!
PLEASE!!
HEY!!!

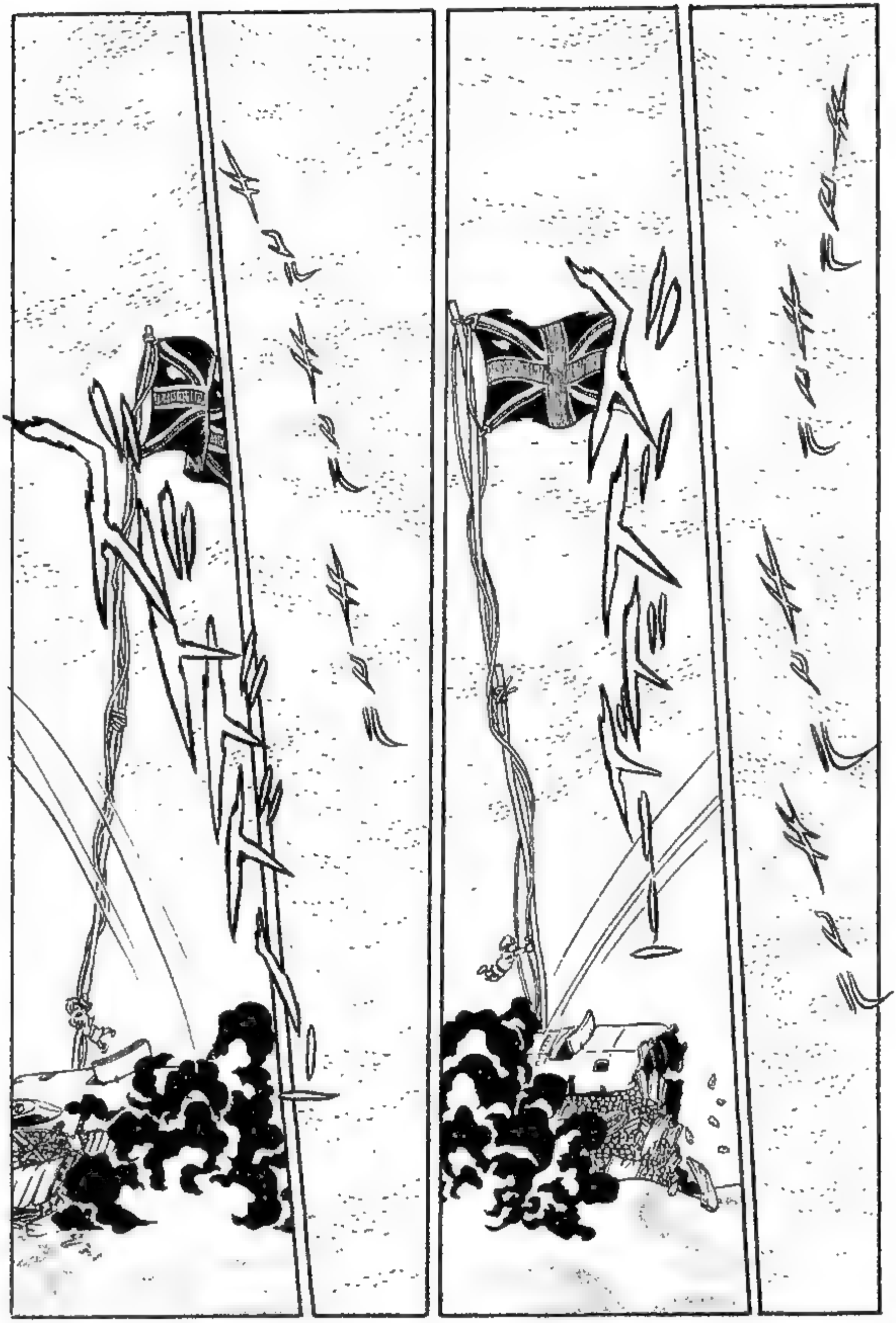
CAN'T YOU SEE THE PLANE WRECKS?!?!
C'MON! GIVE US A HAND! WE NEED HELP!!


THEY COULD AT LEAST DROP US SOME WATER!
OR MAYBE THEY DON'T WANT TO CRASH TOO.
THEY JUST DON'T WANT TO!
THEY OUGHTTA BE ABLE TO SEE US, AS LOW AS THEY ARE!

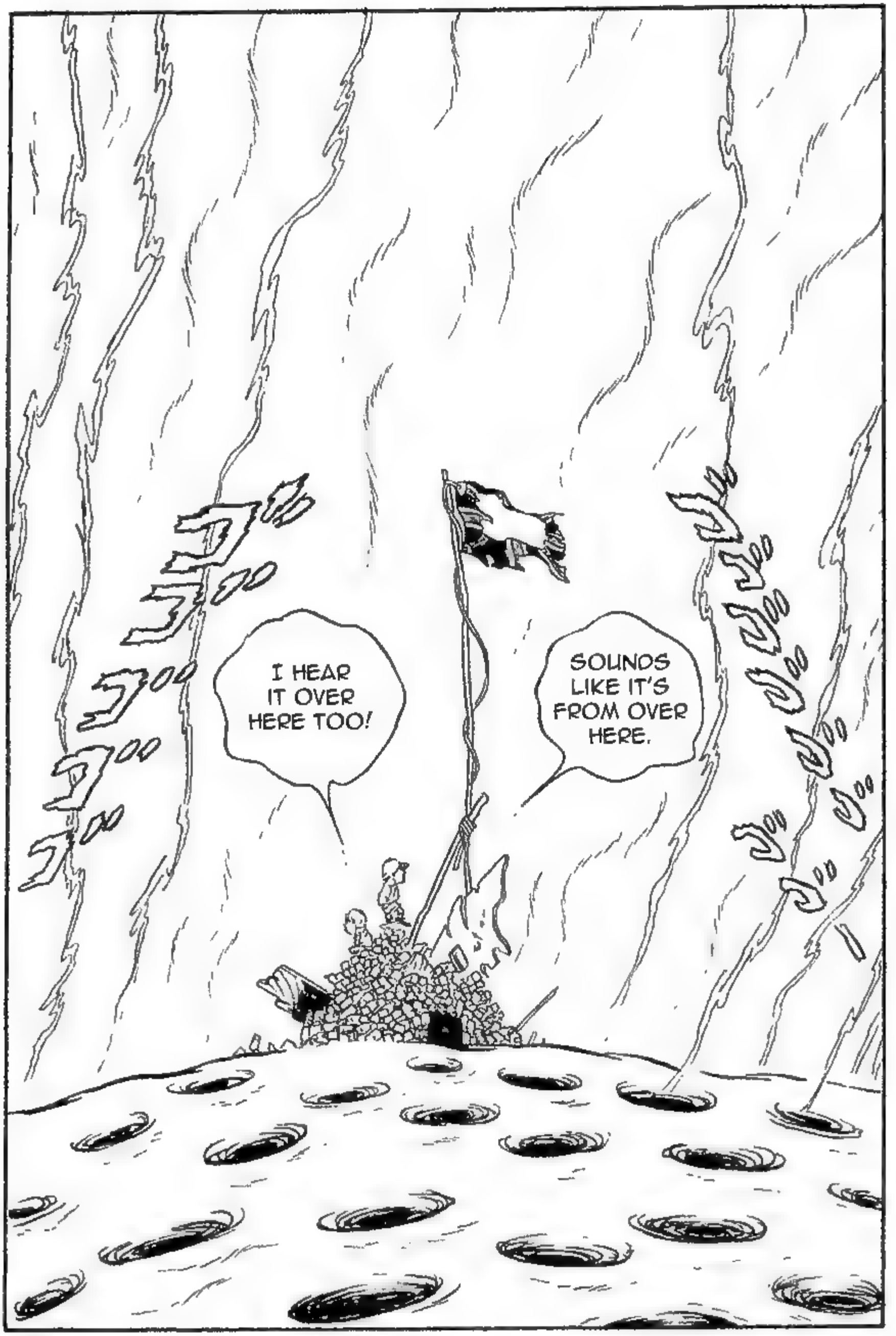
WELL ... AT LEAST WE STILL HAVE THE SCOTCH.
SHUT UP. JUST SHUT THE HELL UP, OKAY?

SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 1 of 2)





SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 1 of 2)


I HEAR IT OVER HERE TOO!
SOUNDS LIKE IT'S FROM OVER HERE.

SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 1 of 2)

SAND AND SCOTCH
(PART 2 OF 2)

MEIN GOTT! SIEH DIR DAS AN! VERTREIBE DIE BRITEN! SCHNAPP DIR DEN SCHOTTEN!*

(*) "MY GOD! LOOK AT ALL THAT! DRIVE THE BRITISH OFF! CAPTURE THAT SCOTCH!!

... AND IN THIS ONE A MIXED GERMAN-ITALIAN UNIT OF THE AFRIKA KORPS!

IN THIS CORNER WE HAVE A BRITISH ROYAL TANK UNIT ...

YOU KNOW, I'D LAY ODDS ON THE AFRIKA KORPS, BUT I'M NOT FOND OF SPAGHETTI OR SAUERKRAUT.

OH YEAH! SORRY!

C'MON! GIVE ME A HAND! WE'RE BRITISH, REMEMBER?

THIS SCOTCH IS SIR WINSTON'S! WE'VE GOT TO MAKE SURE OUR SIDE WINDS UP WITH IT!

HEY, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

DIDN'T AL CAPONE SAY THAT BEFORE THE WAR?

I'VE HEARD ITALIANS WILL FIGHT FOR THREE THINGS: MONEY, LIQUOR, AND WOMEN.

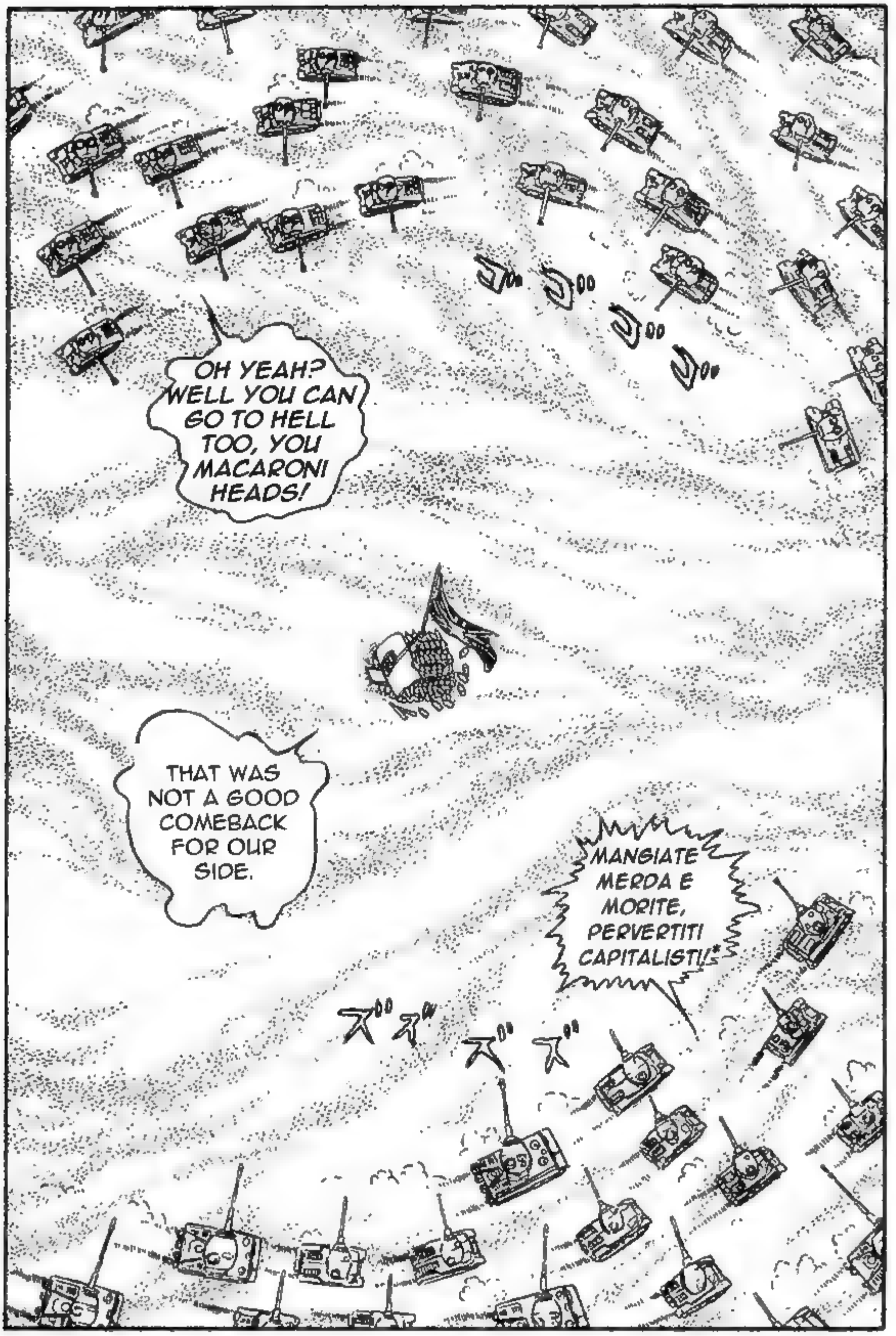
SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 2 of 2)

BURY-ING IT!
HUH? WHAT ARE YOU DOING NOW?
HEY, THAT ITALIAN SELF-PROPELLED GUN IS KINDA COOL* ....
AND I'M NO DOG, BUT I'M GONNA SAVE ALL I CAN FOR OUR SIDE!
THESE AREN'T BONES, YOU KNOW.
IMMER WEITER ANGREIFEN! WIR HABEN SIE FAST! BALD GEHÖRT DER SCOTCH UNS!**
YOU'LL NEVER BURY ALL OF IT IN TIME!
TUTTE LE STRADE PORTANO A ROMA, TRANNE QUESTA CHE PORTA ALLO SCOTCH!***

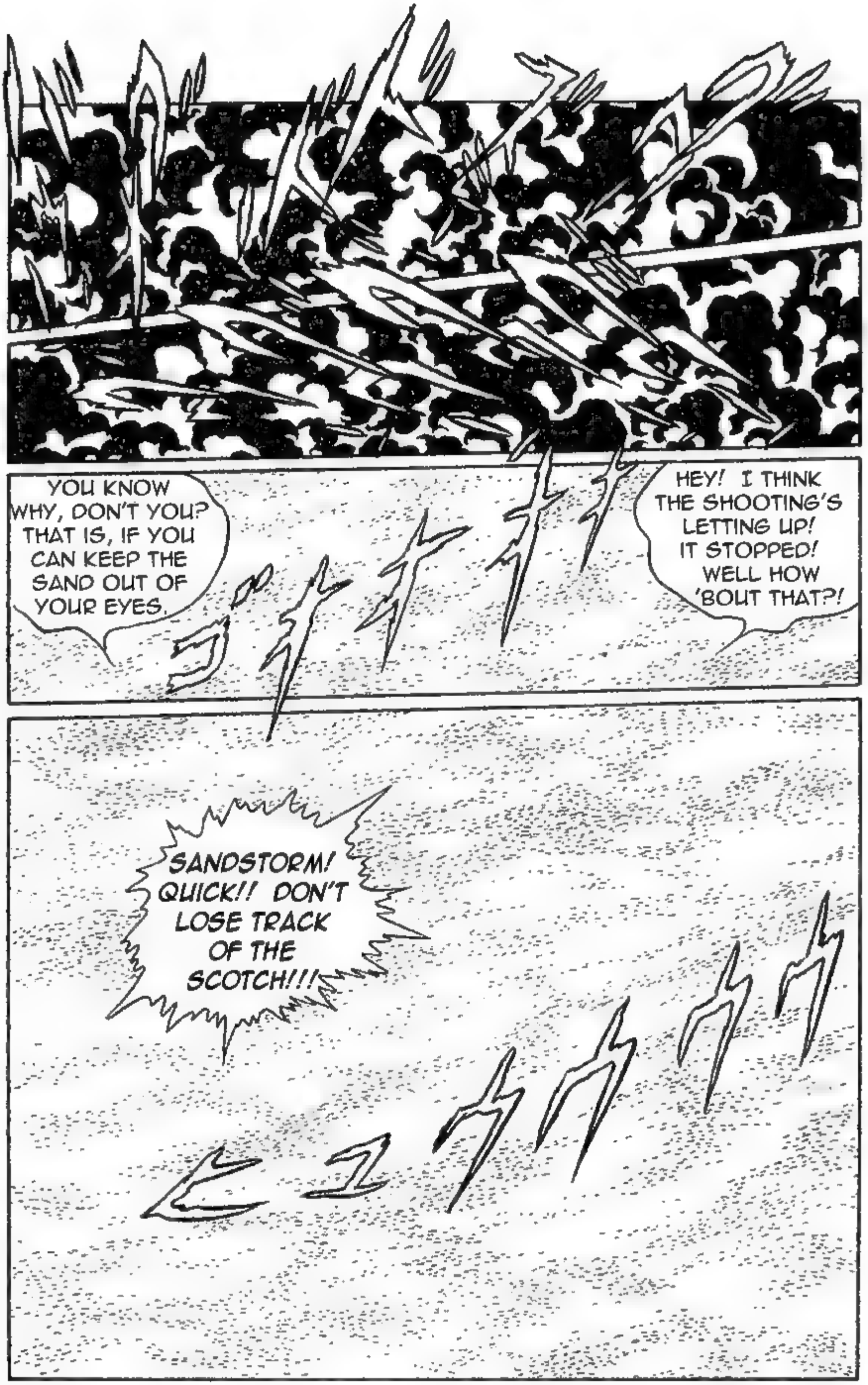
(*) THE SEMOVEMENTE 75/18, ONE OF THE FEW ITALIAN ARMOR UNITS THAT ACTUALLY PERFORMED QUITE WELL UNDER DESERT CONDITIONS. MOST OF THE OTHERS WERE DESIGNED FOR ALPINE TERRAIN AND DID POORLY.

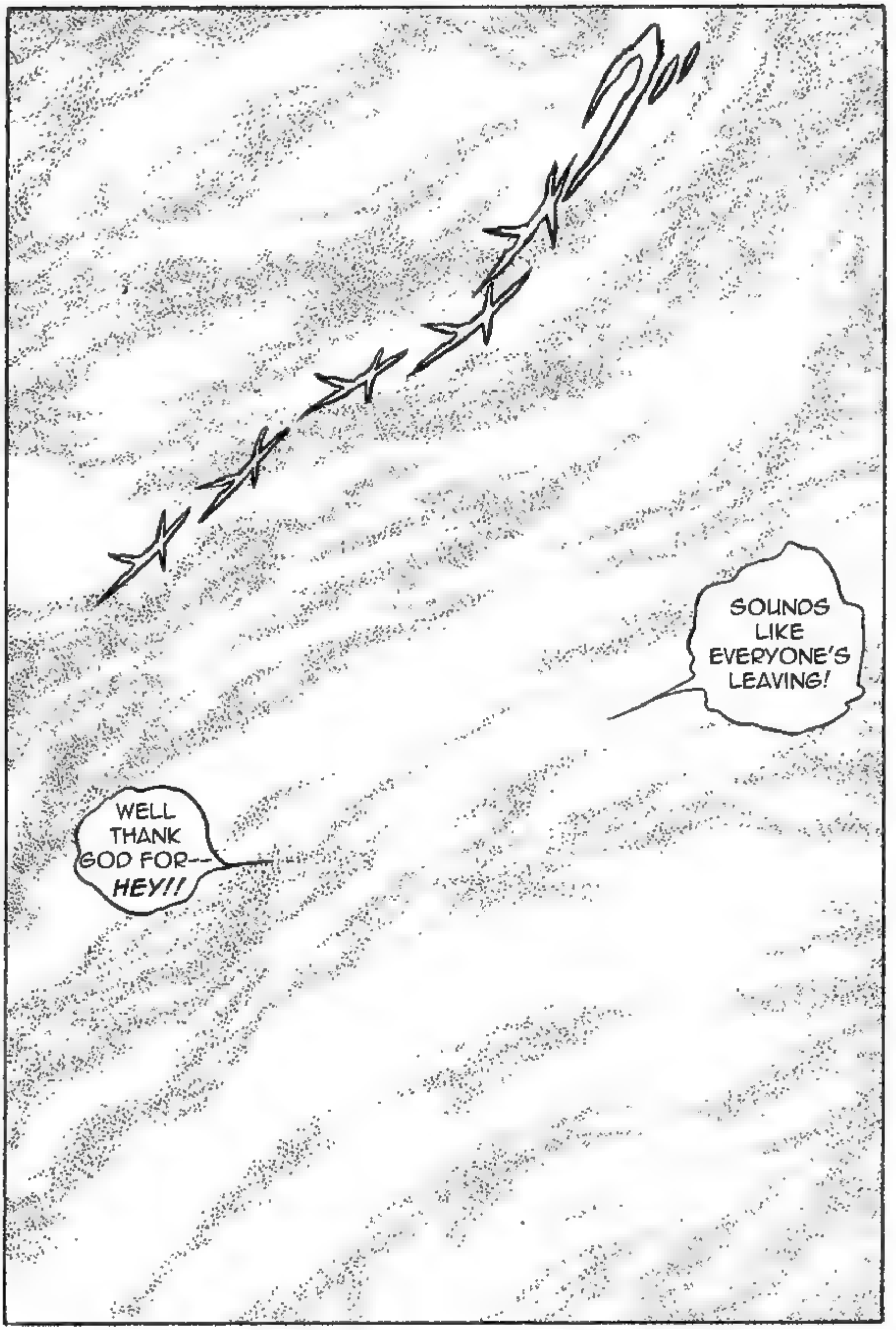
(**) "KEEP PRESSING THE ATTACK! WE'VE ALMOST GOT THEM! SOON THE SCOTCH WILL BE OURS!"

(***) "ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME SAVE THIS ONE, WHICH LEADS TO SCOTCH!"

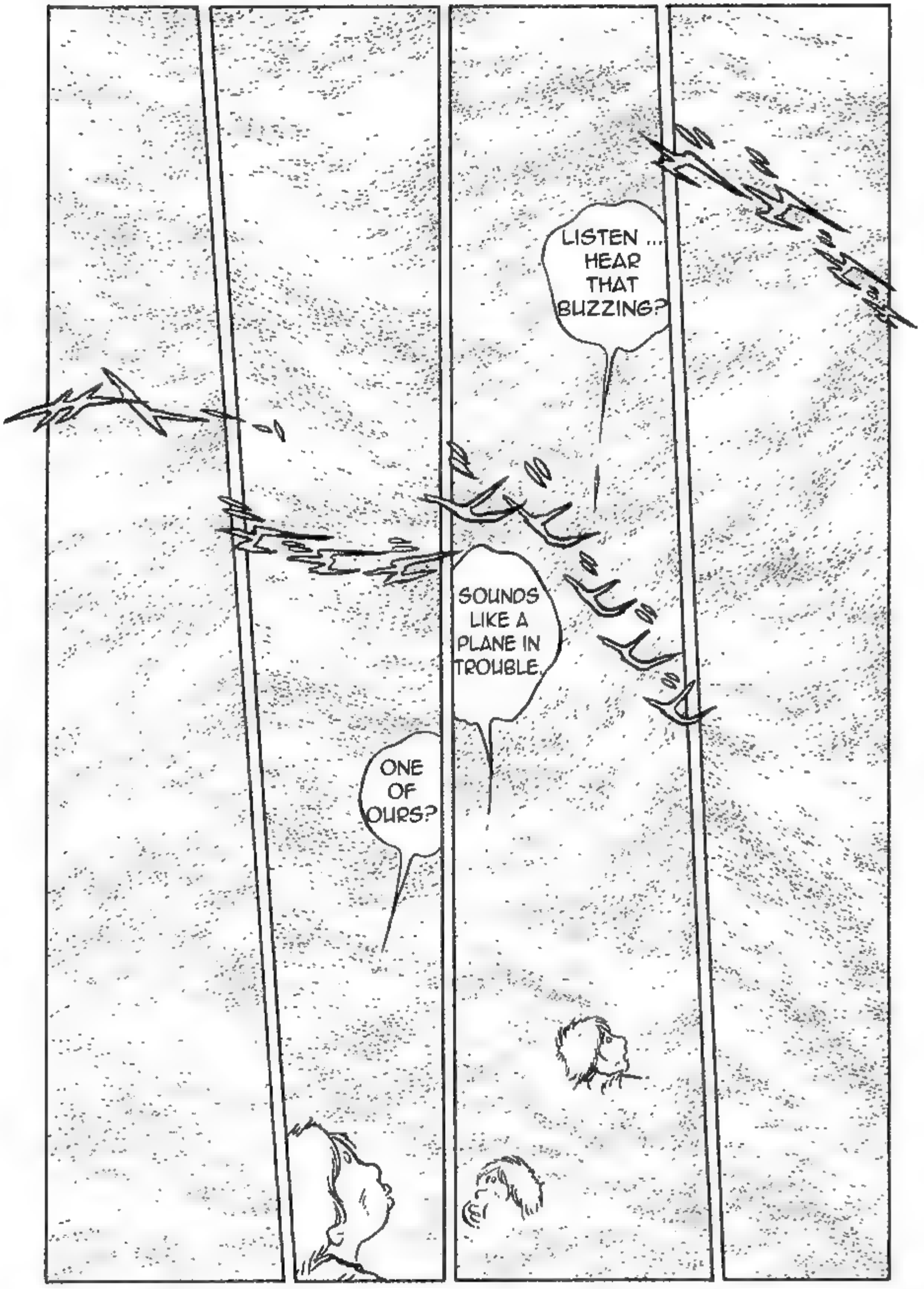

OH YEAH? WELL YOU CAN GO TO HELL TOO, YOU MACARONI HEADS!
THAT WAS NOT A GOOD COMEBACK FOR OUR SIDE.
MANGIATE MERDA E MORITE, PERVERTITI CAPITALISTI!*

(*) "EAT SHIT AND DIE, YOU PERVERTED CAPITALISTS!" THE JAPANESE ORIGINAL OF THE LAST HALF IS SOMEWHAT STRONGER, READING "YOU ISLAND NATION FULL OF PERVERTS!" "MACARONI" WAS BRITISH WARTIME SLANG FOR AN ITALIAN.


YOU KNOW WHY, DON'T YOU? THAT IS, IF YOU CAN KEEP THE SAND OUT OF YOUR EYES.
HEY! I THINK THE SHOOTING'S LETTING UP! IT STOPPED! WELL HOW 'BOUT THAT?!
SANDSTORM! QUICK!! DON'T LOSE TRACK OF THE SCOTCH!!!


SOUNDS LIKE EVERYONE'S LEAVING!
WELL THANK GOD FOR-- HEY!!

SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 2 of 2)



VISIBILITY IS EXTREMELY LIMITED DUE TO THE SANDSTORM, MAJOR WEINER!

THEN WE'LL HAVE TO FLY AS LOW AS WE CAN, LEUTNANT!

I CAN SMELL IT! THE SCOTCH IS HERE AS REPORTED!

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!

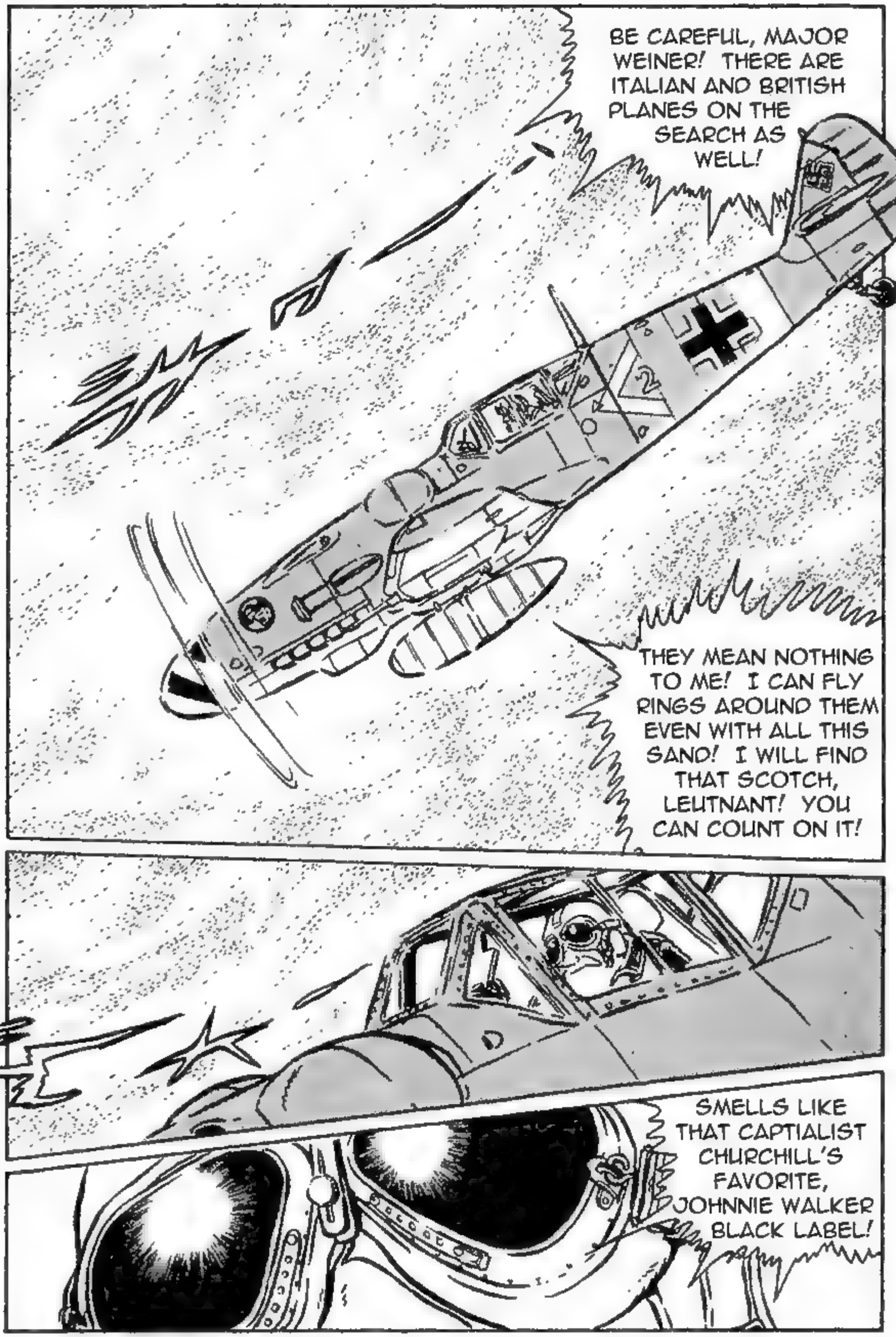
HEAD BACK IF YOU WANT! I'LL CONTINUE THE SEARCH ALONE!

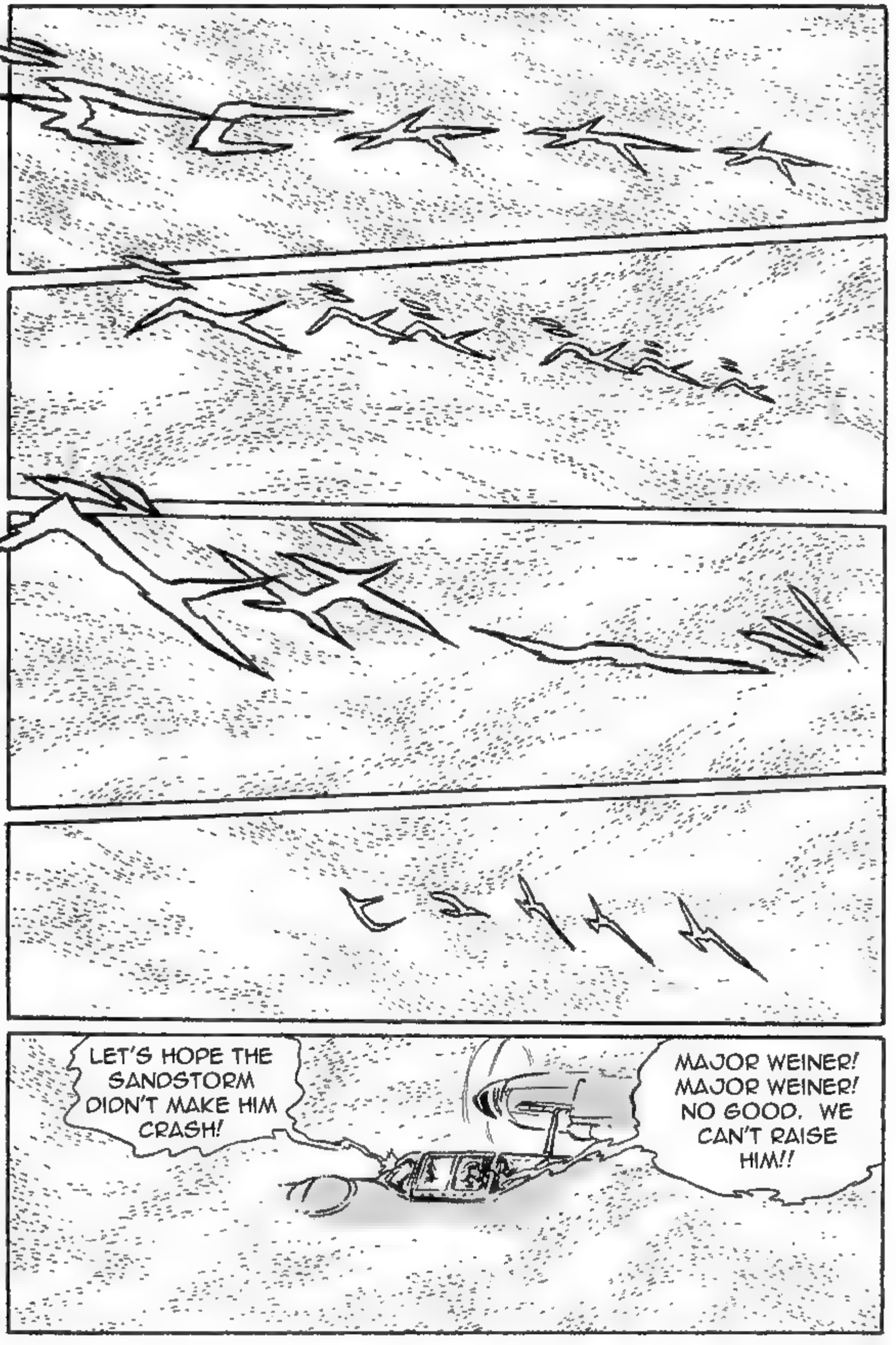
WATCH WHAT YOU'RE SAYING! NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE TO A GERMAN! ACH, DAMN ALL THIS SAND!

AND I'LL FIND IT TOO, OR MY NAME ISN'T JOHANN BIELDEN WEINER!*

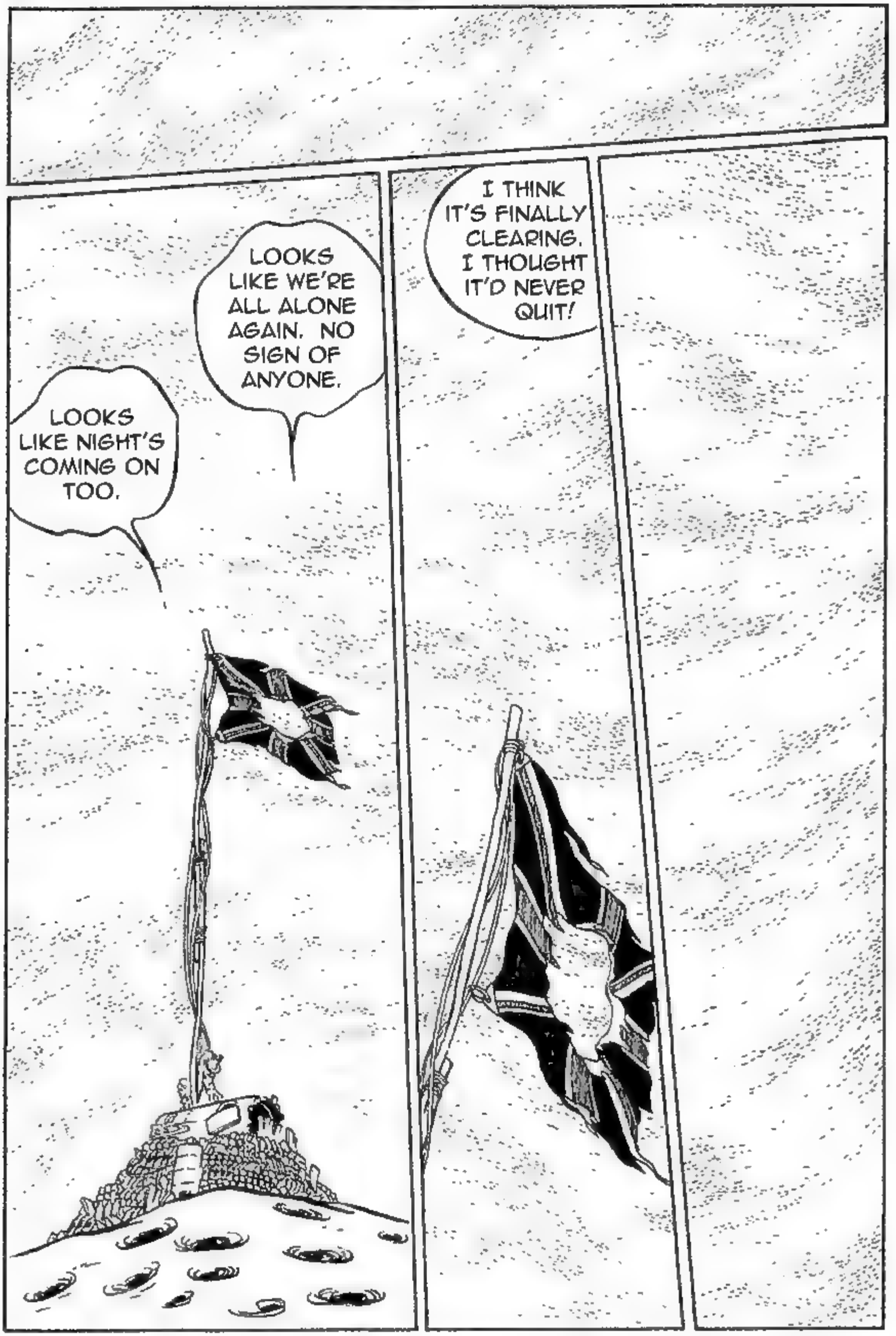
(*) PRONOUNCED "VAI-NAH," AND NOT "WEE-NER" AS MOST AMERICANS TEND TO SAY THE GERMAN NAME.

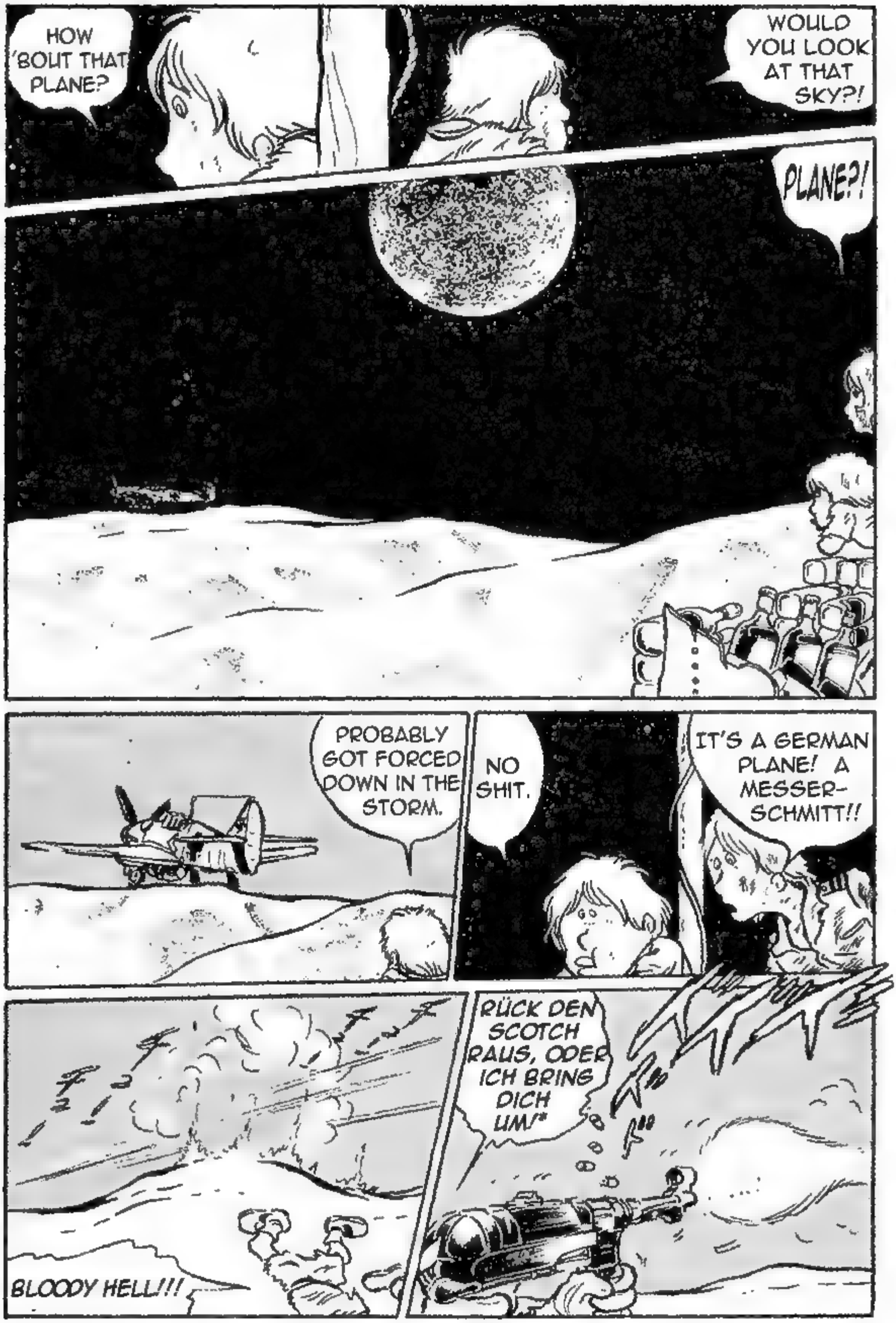
SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 2 of 2)


BE CAREFUL, MAJOR WEINER! THERE ARE ITALIAN AND BRITISH PLANES ON THE SEARCH AS WELL!
THEY MEAN NOTHING TO ME! I CAN FLY RINGS AROUND THEM EVEN WITH ALL THIS SAND! I WILL FIND THAT SCOTCH, LEUTNANT! YOU CAN COUNT ON IT!
SMELLS LIKE THAT CAPTIALIST CHURCHILL'S FAVORITE, JOHNNIE WALKER BLACK LABEL!


LET'S HOPE THE SANDSTORM DIDN'T MAKE HIM CRASH!
MAJOR WEINER! MAJOR WEINER! NO GOOD. WE CAN'T RAISE HIM!!

SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 2 of 2)


LOOKS LIKE NIGHT'S COMING ON TOO.
LOOKS LIKE WE'RE ALL ALONE AGAIN. NO SIGN OF ANYONE.
I THINK IT'S FINALLY CLEARING. I THOUGHT IT'D NEVER QUIT!


HOW 'BOUT THAT PLANE?
WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT SKY?!
PLANE?!
PROBABLY GOT FORCED DOWN IN THE STORM.
NO SHIT.
IT'S A GERMAN PLANE! A MESSER-SCHMITT!!
BLOODY HELL!!!
RÜCK DEN SCOTCH RAUS, ODER ICH BRING DICH UM!*

(*) DE. "SURRENDER THE SCOTCH OR I'LL KILL YOU!"

SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 2 of 2)

GREAT. JUST GREAT. WE TRADE ONE STANDOFF FOR ANOTHER.
MAYBE IT'LL BE THE LAST. THE SANDSTORM KILLED THE SMELL OF SCOTCH EVERYWHERE.
WILL FRITZ OUT THERE LET US?
THINK YOU CAN FIX IT IF WE CAN GET NEAR IT?
NOT THAT IT MATTERS. IT LOOKS DAMAGED. IT MIGHT NOT EVEN FLY.
TOO BAD IT DIDN'T BLOW FRITZ AWAY WITH HIS GUN SO WE COULD GET HIS PLANE.

MAJOR JOHANN BIELDEN WEINER, LUFTWAFFE. BIST DU BEREIT AUFZUGEBEN?*

'ALLO, 'ALLO! WE ARE BRITISH! YOU ARE?

I'M PRIVATE SANBURN, SAME OUTFIT.

HOO BOY. HE IS LIEUTENANT PHILIPS, 3RD TRANSPORT WING.

SPRICHT ZE DEUTSCH?

EEN-GLISH? DO YOU KNOW ANY EN-GLISH?

EST IST UNMÖGLICH! AH, AH, NO CAN DO! AH, EMH- POSSABIL!

AH, OKAY. ACHTUNG! HERE, SCOTCH! ALL YOU WANT! ALLE SCOTCH! ON ONE CONDITION! UHH, EN ZUSTARD!** WE FIX PLANE! FIXIERN PLAN-EN, JA?!

NICHT? ES WAHR ***

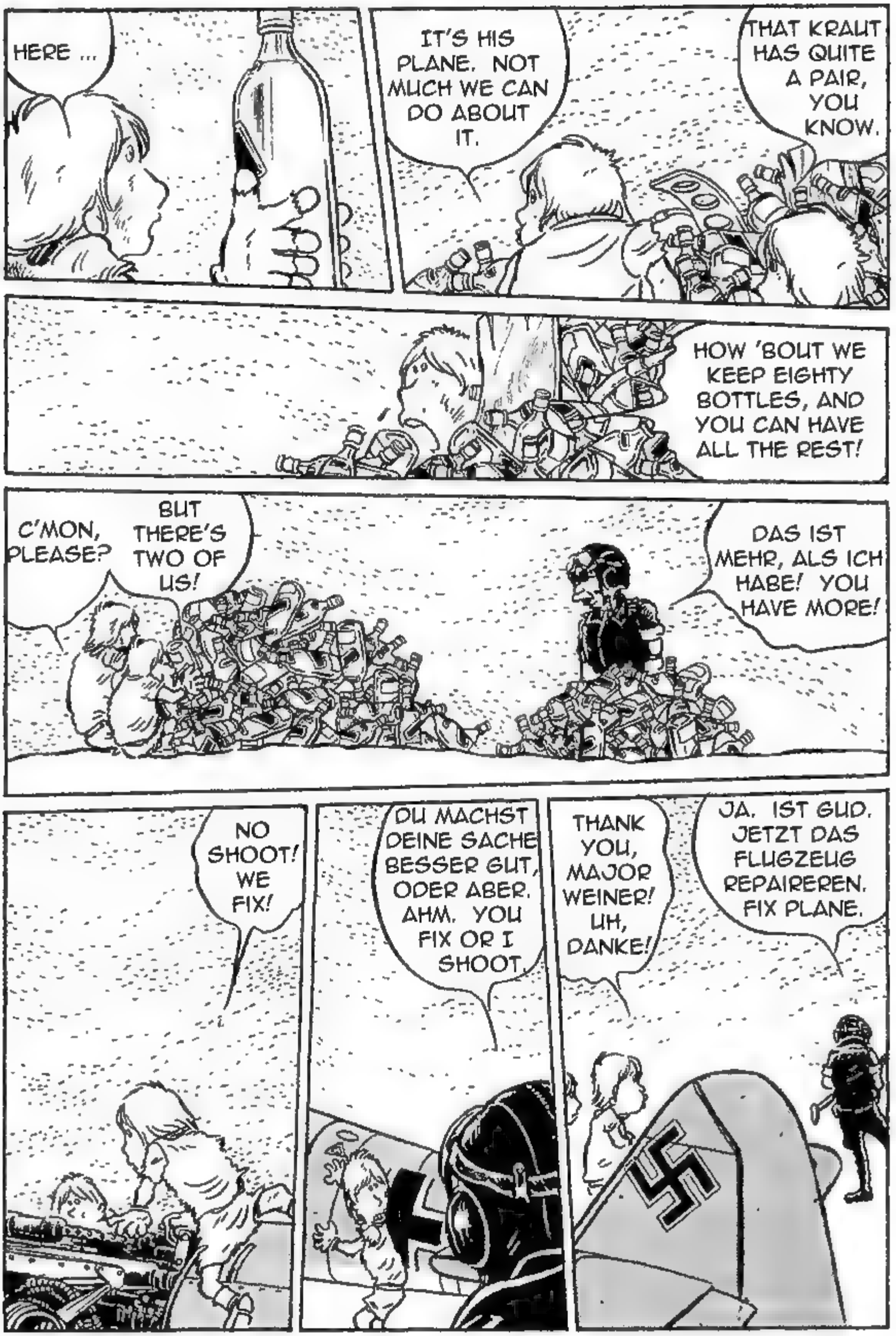
I WAS TOLD THE WORD "IMPOSSIBLE" ISN'T IN THE GERMAN DICTIONARY! AH, AHMM ...

IS OKAY DOKAY!

ENGLANDERS! WIR SIND UNS EINIG, UHMM, WE HAVE DEAL! ME SCOTCH, YOU FIX PLANE! IST OKEY DOKEY?

(*) DE. "ARE YOU READY TO GIVE UP?"
(**) WRONG WORD, WEINER HEARS "ONE CUSTARD!"
(***) DE. "YOU'RE RIGHT. IT ISN'T."

SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 2 of 2)


HERE ...
IT'S HIS PLANE. NOT MUCH WE CAN DO ABOUT IT.
THAT KRAUT HAS QUITE A PAIR, YOU KNOW.
HOW 'BOUT WE KEEP EIGHTY BOTTLES, AND YOU CAN HAVE ALL THE REST!
C'MON, PLEASE?
BUT THERE'S TWO OF US!
DAS IST MEHR, ALS ICH HABE! YOU HAVE MORE!
NO SHOOT! WE FIX!
DU MACHST DEINE SACHE BESSER GUT, ODER ABER. AHM. YOU FIX OR I SHOOT.
THANK YOU, MAJOR WEINER! UH, DANKE!
JA. IST GUD. JETZT DAS FLUGZEUG REPAIREREN. FIX PLANE.

AND ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT THEY TOILED

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

SKNZXX!

IS IT FIXED? WELL, IT WASN'T A VERY GOOD ENGINE TO--

IST EST BEHO-BEN?

GOOD MORNING TO YOU TOO!

ACH! MORGEN!

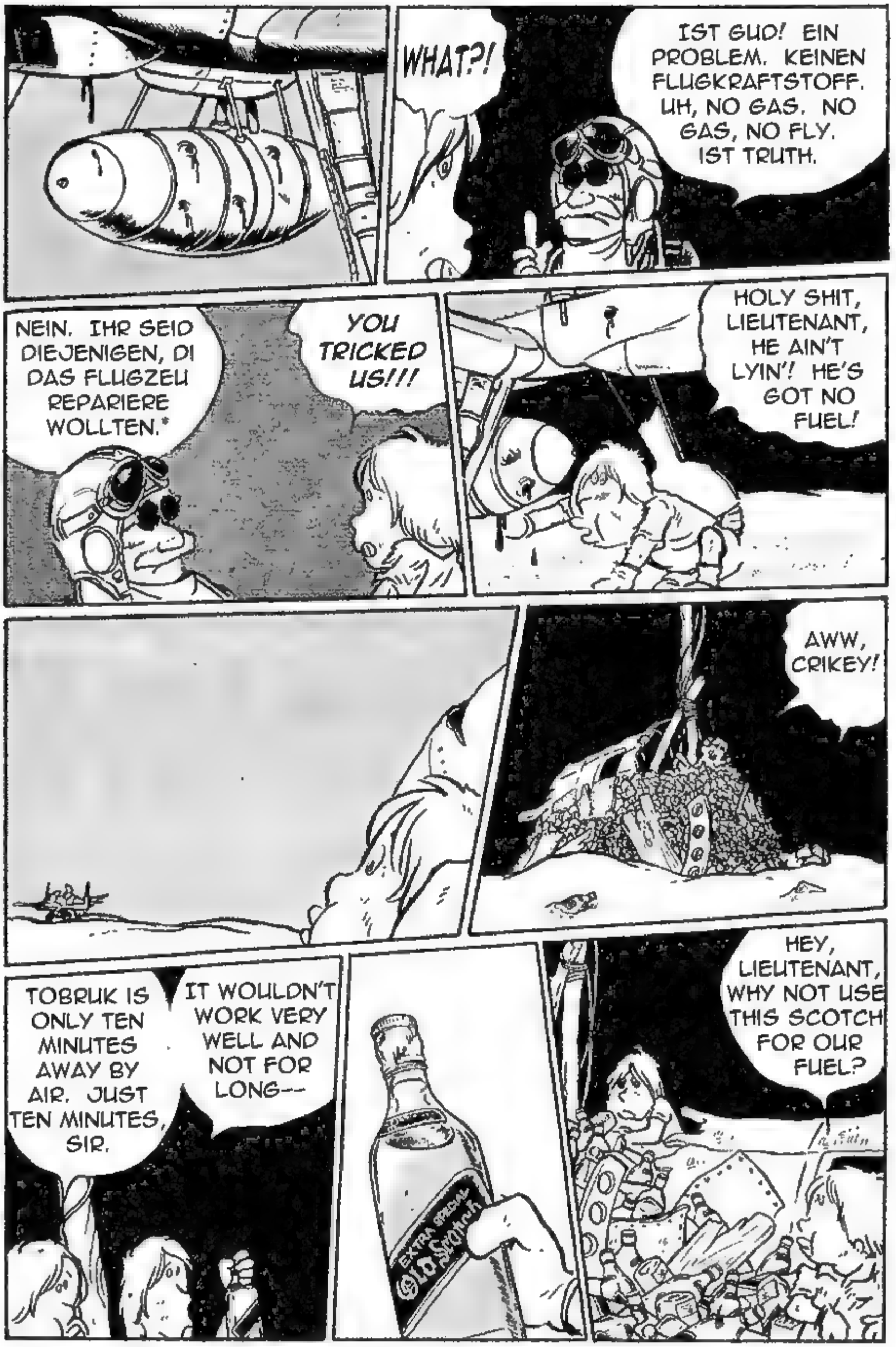
YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO KNOW SHE'S FIXED AND READY TO FLY, SIR!

SORRY! DIDN'T MEAN TO UPSET YOU, MAJOR! SETTLE DOWN!

DEUTSCHE MOTOREN SIND UNÜBERTROFFEN! DU SOLLTEST STOLZ DARAU SEIN, AN EINE ZU ARBEITEN!*

(*) THE MAJOR IS TELLING THEM THAT GERMAN AIRPLANE ENGINES ARE THE BEST.

SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 2 of 2)


WHAT?!
IST GUD! EIN PROBLEM. KEINEN FLUGKRAFTSTOFF. UH, NO GAS. NO GAS, NO FLY. IST TRUTH.
NEIN. IHR SEID DIEJENIGEN, DI DAS FLUGZEU REPARIERE WOLLTEN.*
YOU TRICKED US!!!
HOLY SHIT, LIEUTENANT, HE AIN'T LYIN'! HE'S GOT NO FUEL!
AWW, CRIKEY!
TOBRUK IS ONLY TEN MINUTES AWAY BY AIR. JUST TEN MINUTES, SIR.
IT WOULDN'T WORK VERY WELL AND NOT FOR LONG--
EXTRA SPECIAL OLD SCOTCH
HEY, LIEUTENANT, WHY NOT USE THIS SCOTCH FOR OUR FUEL?

(*) DE. "NO I DIDN'T. YOU'RE THE ONES WHO WANTED TO FIX THE PLANE."

DU WILLST MEIN FLUGZEUG MIT SCOTCH FLIEGEN?!

BUT SCOTCH IS STRONG! AH, SCOTCH IST DA VEST!

EIN DEUTSCHER MOTOR, DER MIT BRITISCHEM SCOTCH LÄUFT – SO ETWAS HABE ICH NOCH NIE GEHÖRT!*

IF YOUR GERMAN ENGINE IS AS GOOD AS YOU CLAIM, IT SHOULD RUN ON SCOTCH!

IHR BEIDEN SEID VERRÜCKT, ABER LASST ES UNS VERSUCHEN.** UH, OKEY-DOKEY LET'S TRY.

BOTH HE AND I, AH, STEIK OUR LIF-EN UN DIS!

WE'LL HAVE TO FINE-TUNE YOUR ENGINE A BIT MORE, BUT I PROMISE YOU WE CAN GET IT UP IN THE AIR!

WE CAN MAKE THIS WORK, MAJOR WEINER!

GLUG! GLUG! GLUG! GLUG! GLUG! GLUG! GLUG! GLUG! GLUG!

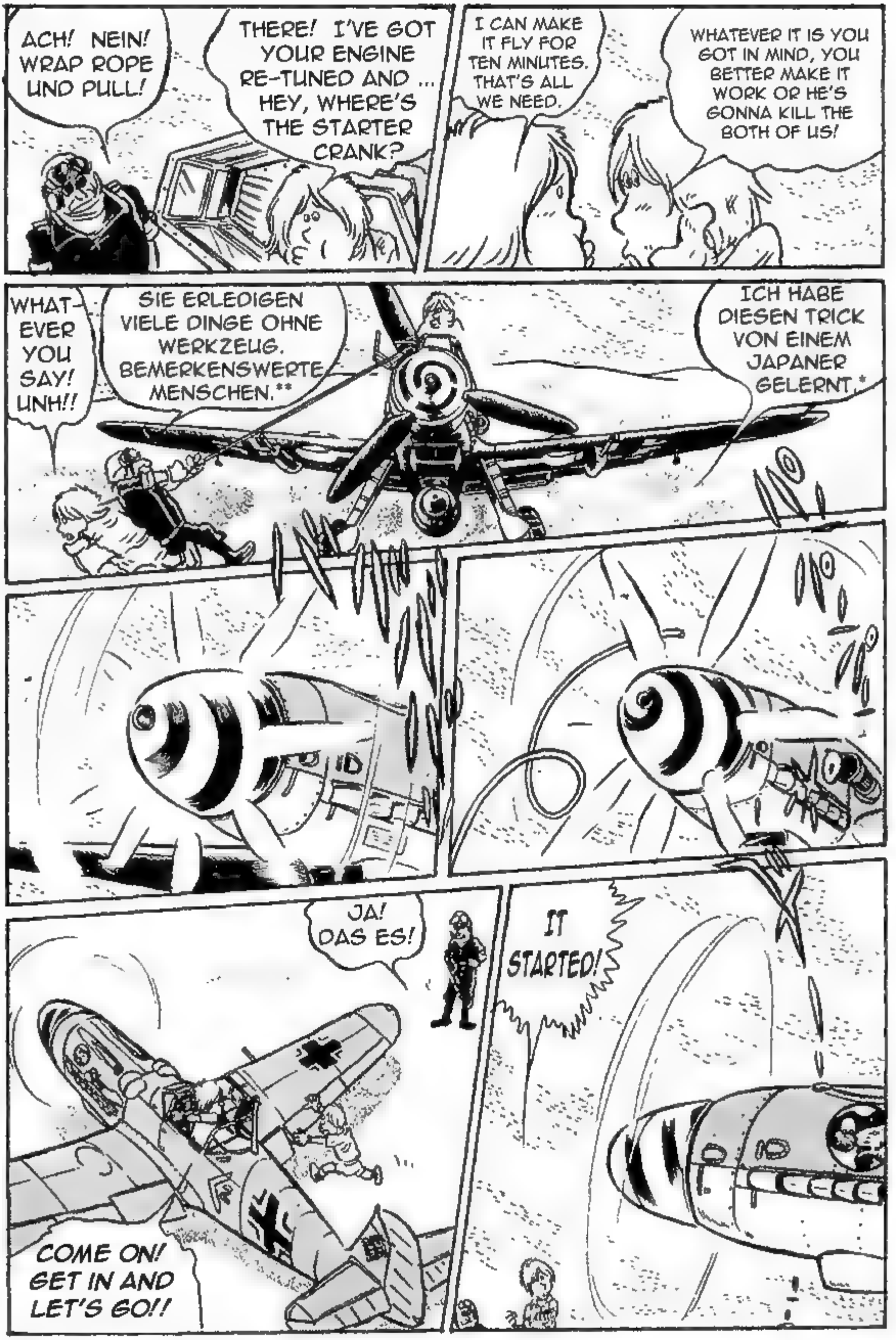
ARE YOU CRAZY?! A PLANE ENGINE CAN'T RUN ON ALCOHOL! JEEZUZ ...

VERSTAN-DEN, BUT I ASSURE YOU IT WILL FLY.

JA. DO IT. IF NO FLY I KILL YOU. VERSTANDEN, BRITE?***

(*) WEINER'S RESPONSE IN FULL – "YOU'RE GOING TO FLY MY PLANE ON SCOTCH?! A GERMAN ENGINE RUNNING ON BRITISH SCOTCH! I'VE NEVER HEARD OF IT!" I.E. "THAT'S RIDICULOUS!"
(**) DE. "YOU TWO ARE CRAZY, BUT LET'S TRY IT."
(***) DE. "VERSTANDEN, BRITE?" = EN. "UNDERSTAND, BRITISH(ER)?"
"BRITE" IS PRONOUNCED "BRIT-EH," NOT ONE WORD LIKE THE ENGLISH "BRITE"

SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 2 of 2)


ACH! NEIN! WRAP ROPE UND PULL!
THERE! I'VE GOT YOUR ENGINE RE-TUNED AND ... HEY, WHERE'S THE STARTER CRANK?
I CAN MAKE IT FLY FOR TEN MINUTES. THAT'S ALL WE NEED.
WHATEVER IT IS YOU GOT IN MIND, YOU BETTER MAKE IT WORK OR HE'S GONNA KILL THE BOTH OF US!
WHAT-EVER YOU SAY! UNH!!
SIE ERLEDIGEN VIELE DINGE OHNE WERKZEUG. BEMERKENSWERTE MENSCHEN.**
ICH HABE DIESEN TRICK VON EINEM JAPANER GELERNT.*
JA! DAS ES!
IT STARTED!
COME ON! GET IN AND LET'S GO!!

(*) DE. "I LEARNED THIS TRICK FROM A JAPANESE MAN"
(**) DE. "THEY DO LOTS OF THINGS WITHOUT TOOLS. REMARKABLE PEOPLE."

NEIN ... GO, BRITE!!

HALT!

LET'S GO!

HURRY BEFORE HE SHOOTS!

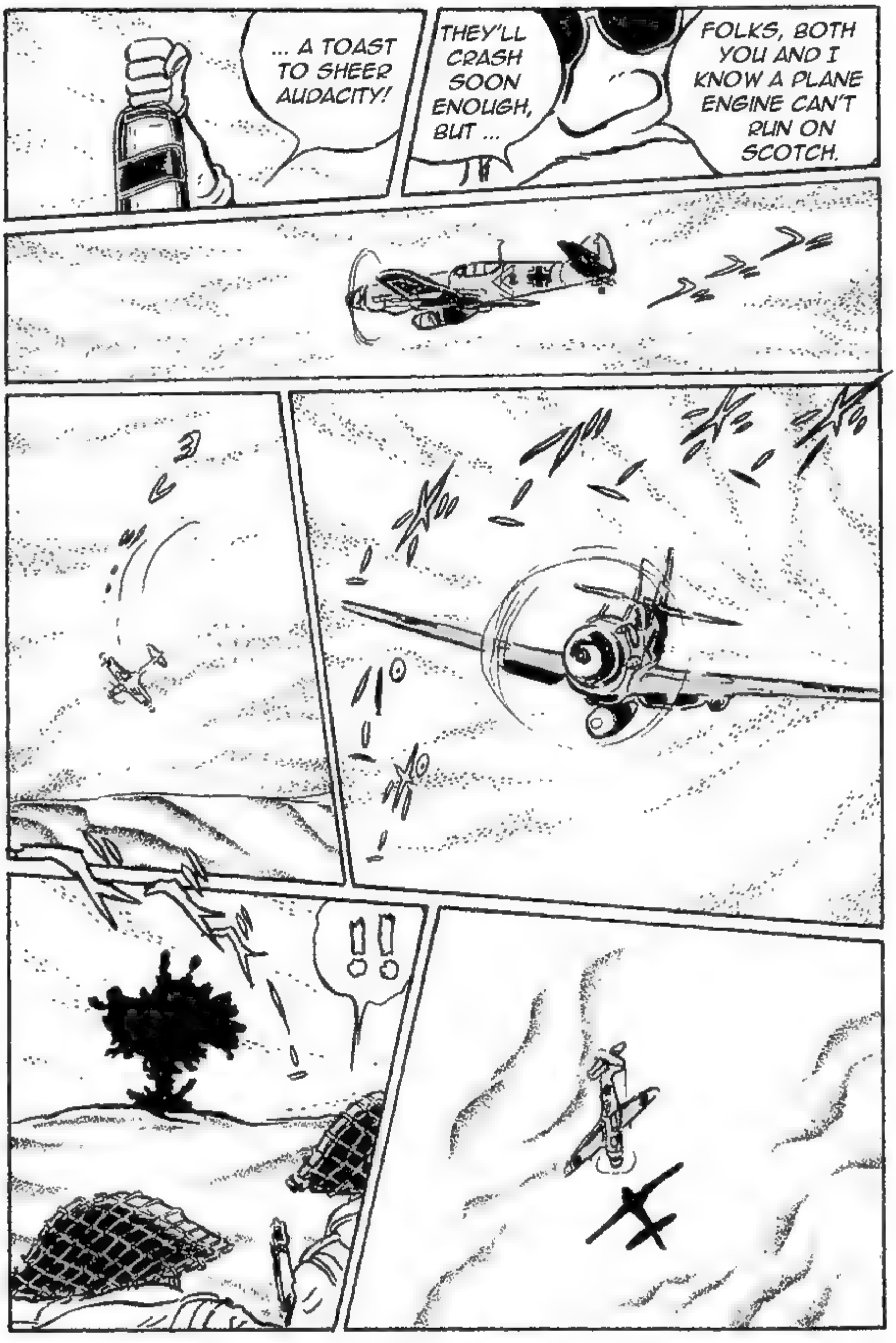
DON'T ARGUE OUR LUCK! TOBRUK, HERE WE COME!!

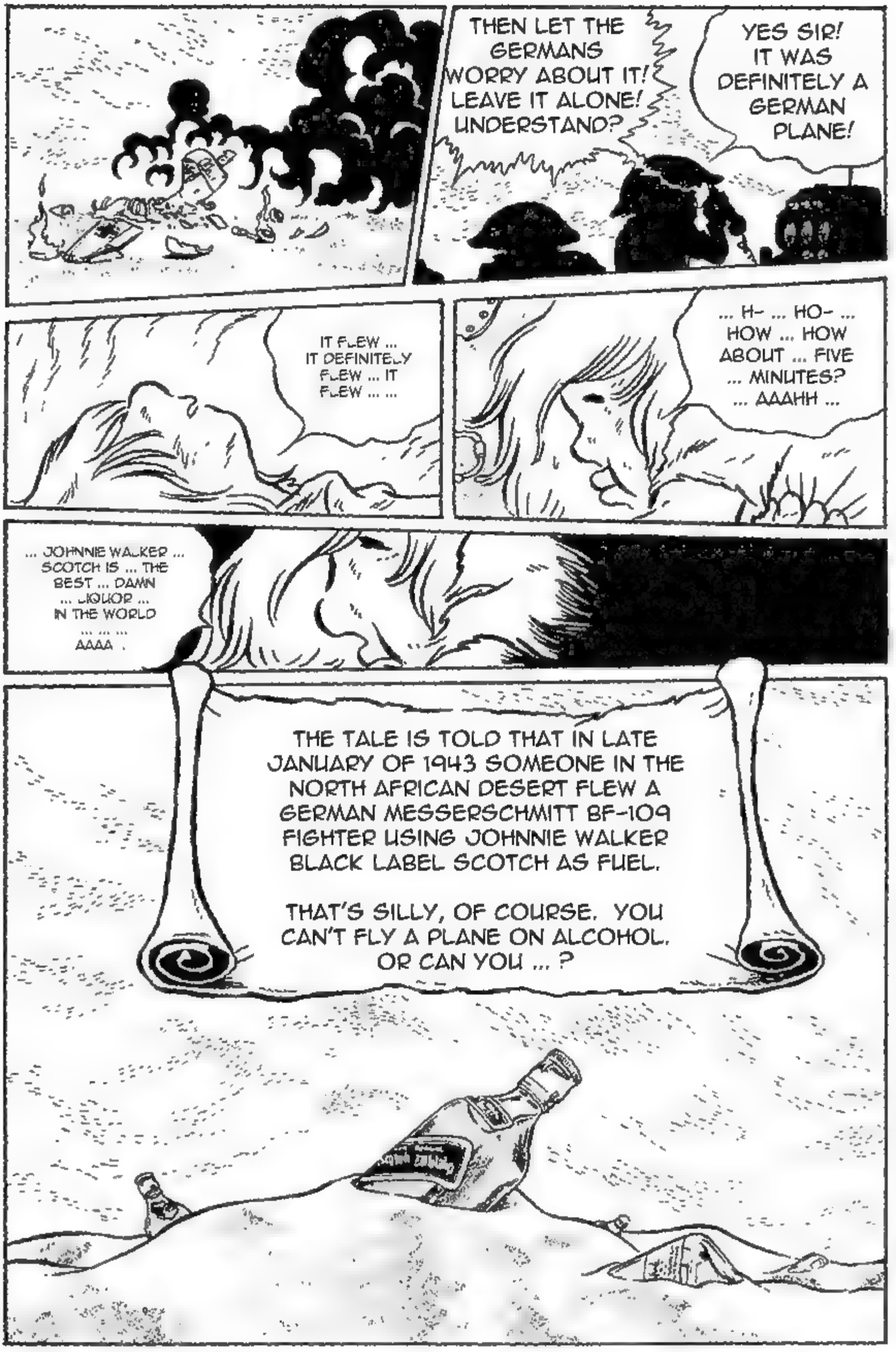
HE'S NOT SHOOTING! HE COULD HAVE SHOT US DOWN! I WONDER WHY HE DIDN'T?

MY PEOPLE WILL BE HERE SOON. THINK I'LL ENJOY SOME SCOTCH WHILE I WAIT.

THEY DID THE IMPOSSIBLE. THEY'RE ALMOST AS SMART AS THAT JAPANESE MAN I MET.

SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 2 of 2)




THEN LET THE GERMANS WORRY ABOUT IT! LEAVE IT ALONE! UNDERSTAND?
YES SIR! IT WAS DEFINITELY A GERMAN PLANE!
IT FLEW ... IT DEFINITELY FLEW ... IT FLEW ... ...
... H- ... HO- ... HOW ... HOW ABOUT ... FIVE ... MINUTES? ... AAAHH ...
... JOHNNIE WALKER ... SCOTCH IS ... THE BEST ... DAMN ... LIQUOR ... IN THE WORLD ... ... AAAA .
THE TALE IS TOLD THAT IN LATE JANUARY OF 1943 SOMEONE IN THE NORTH AFRICAN DESERT FLEW A GERMAN MESSERSCHMITT BF-109 FIGHTER USING JOHNNIE WALKER BLACK LABEL SCOTCH AS FUEL.
THAT'S SILLY, OF COURSE. YOU CAN'T FLY A PLANE ON ALCOHOL. OR CAN YOU ... ?

(Published in Big Comic Original, November 20th and December 5th, 1977 issues)

SAND AND SCOTCH (Part 2 of 2)

LEIJI
MATSUMOTO
PRESENTS

THE COCKPIT

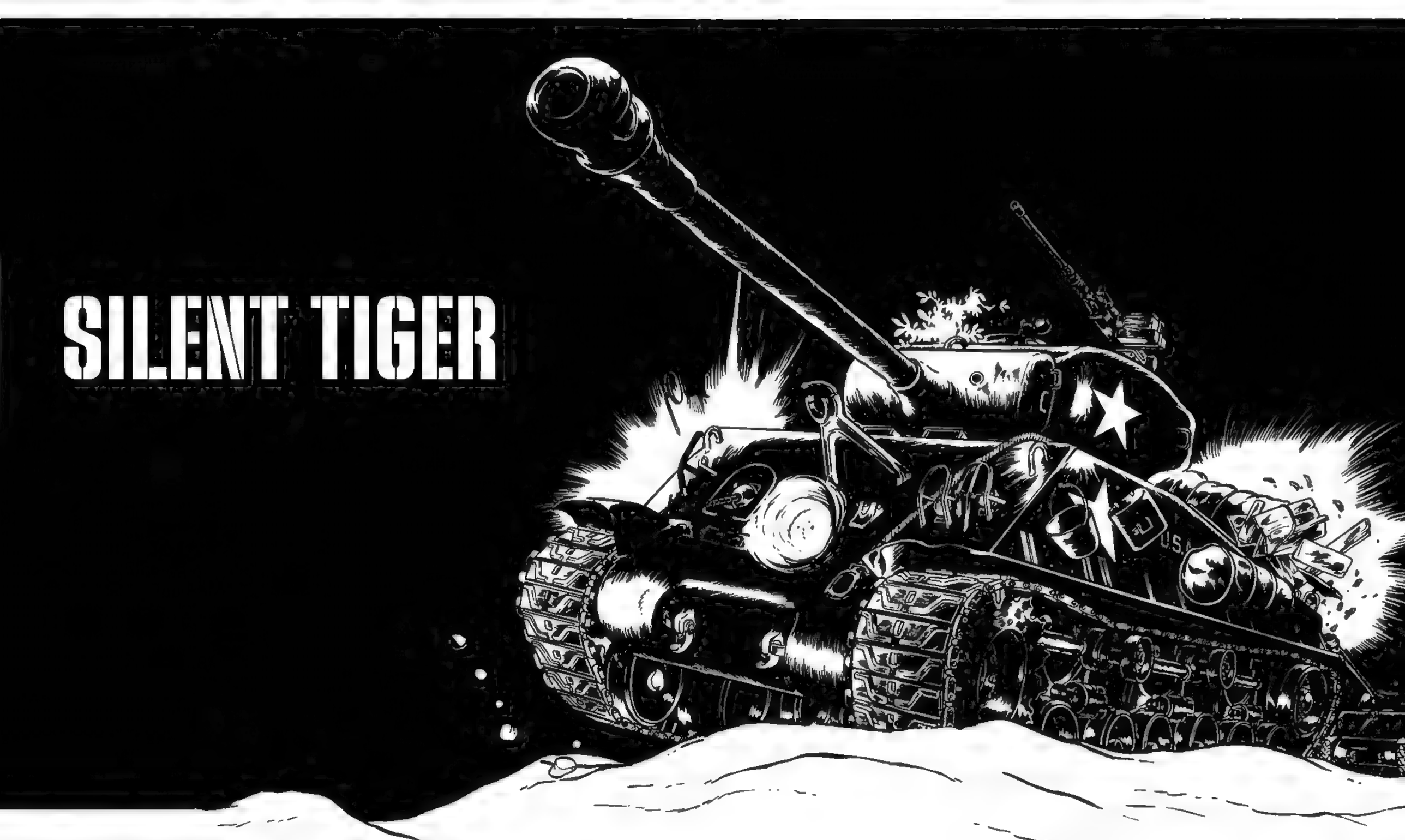
ANIMALS THAT ARE BEING HUNTED SOMETIMES CRY OUT IN FEAR ...

... WHEREAS THE HUNTER REMAINS SILENT UNTIL THE KILL.

ROCKY BEAR, THIS IS KENTUCKY BEAR! THE MOON IS OUT SO BE CAREFUL! THERE STILL MIGHT BE GERMANS OUT, OVER!

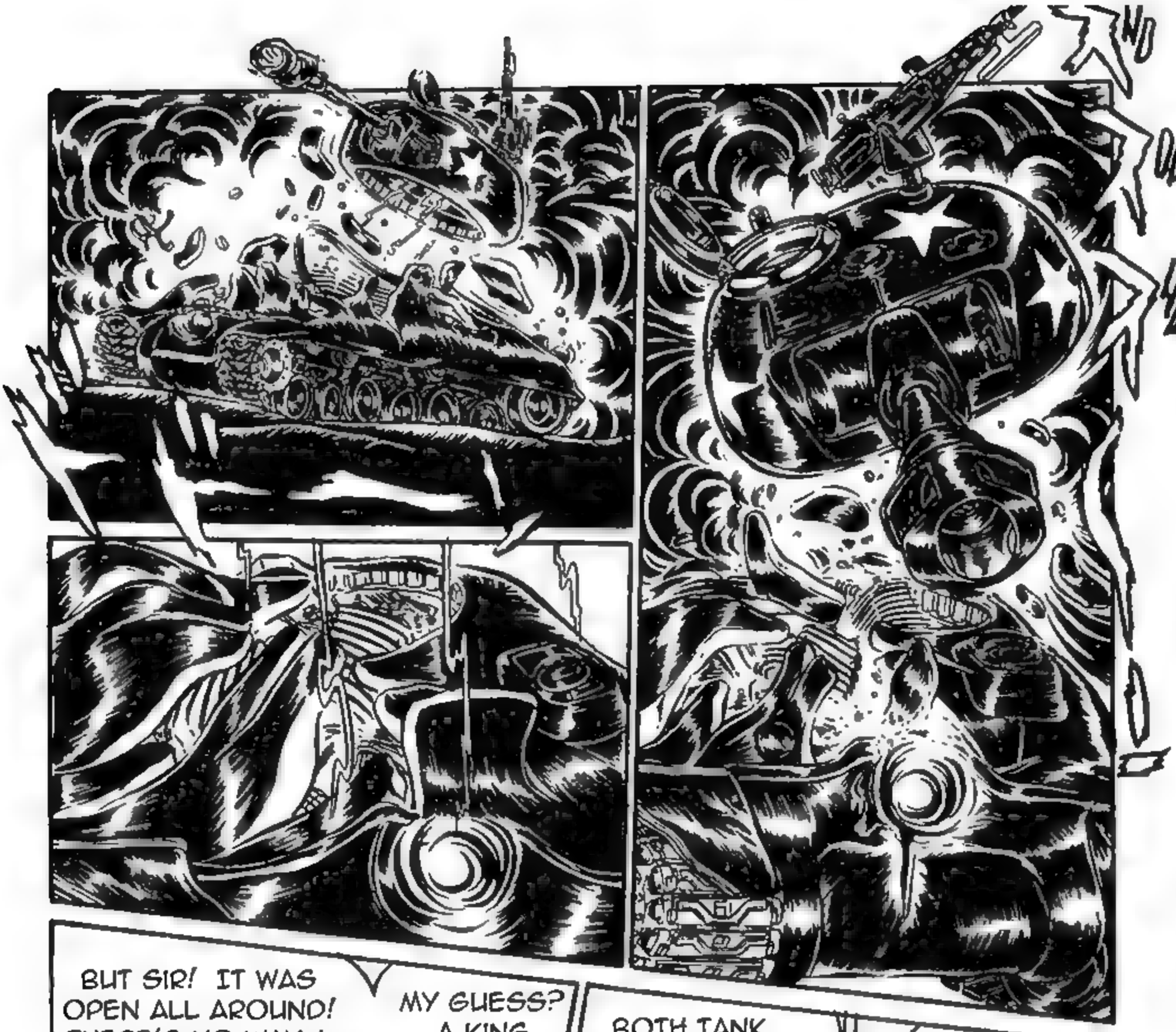
ROCKY BEAR, UNDERSTOOD. THE WAY LOOKS CLEAR AHEAD, SO REST ASSURED!

SILENT TIGER



ROCKY BEAR! WHAT HAPPENED!! COME IN!!!

OH SHI--


BUT SIR! IT WAS OPEN ALL AROUND! THERE'S NO WAY A KING TIGER COULD HAVE SNEAKED UP ON THEM, GIVEN HOW BIG IT IS!
MY GUESS? A KING TIGER.
BOTH TANK BATALLIONS WIPED OUT AS IF THEY WERE NOTHING.
THEY'RE GONE. EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM, GONE.
CAN YOU EXPLAIN IT ANY OTHER WAY?
EVERY ONE OF OUR TANKS WAS TAKEN OUT WITH A SINGLE HIT. THERE'S ONLY A FEW GERMAN WEAPONS THAT CAN DO THAT.
WE'D HAVE SEEN ONE COMING NO MATTER FROM WHICH WAY IT MIGHT HAVE COME, SIR! I MEAN, IT'S SO--
PLUS THERE WAS A FULL MOON!

THE ONLY THING THAT DOESN'T FIT IS THAT THE 88 ON A KING TIGER WOULD HAVE TO HAVE TWO HITS.

I'VE HEARD OF A VARIANT OF THE "STUG"* MOUNTING A 105 INSTEAD OF THE STANDARD 75. COULD THIS BE WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH?

(*) THE "WESPE," AS IT WAS KNOWN.

NO! WE MIGHT BE DISCOVERED IF WE GO AFTER SUCH A SMALL AND FRAGILE TARGET!

LET'S BLOW IT AWAY!

ELMEYER! I SEE SOMETHING!

IT'S AN AMERICAN OBSERVATION TEAM WITH A JEEP!

I SAY LET'S BLOW IT AWAY AND THEN GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE SO WE CAN CONCEAL THIS ELSEWHERE.

IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY FIND US.

DISTANCE 1800, ELEVATION ...

SIGHTING TARGET.

THAT MAKES SENSE TOO.

THAT WAY WE'LL BE SURE TO GET THEM ALL.*

DON'T TARGET THE JEEP DIRECTLY. AIM A BIT AHEAD OF IT.

LOCKED ON TARGET. AWAITING YOUR ORDER TO FIRE.

(*) IN MATSUMOTO'S ORIGINAL TEXT THE GERMANS CLAIM THAT THE GROUND IS VOLCANIC AND THAT THEY HOPE THE HIT WILL BE MISTAKEN FOR A SMALL ERUPTION. I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF REWRITING THIS UNREALISTIC SILLINESS. (R.M.)

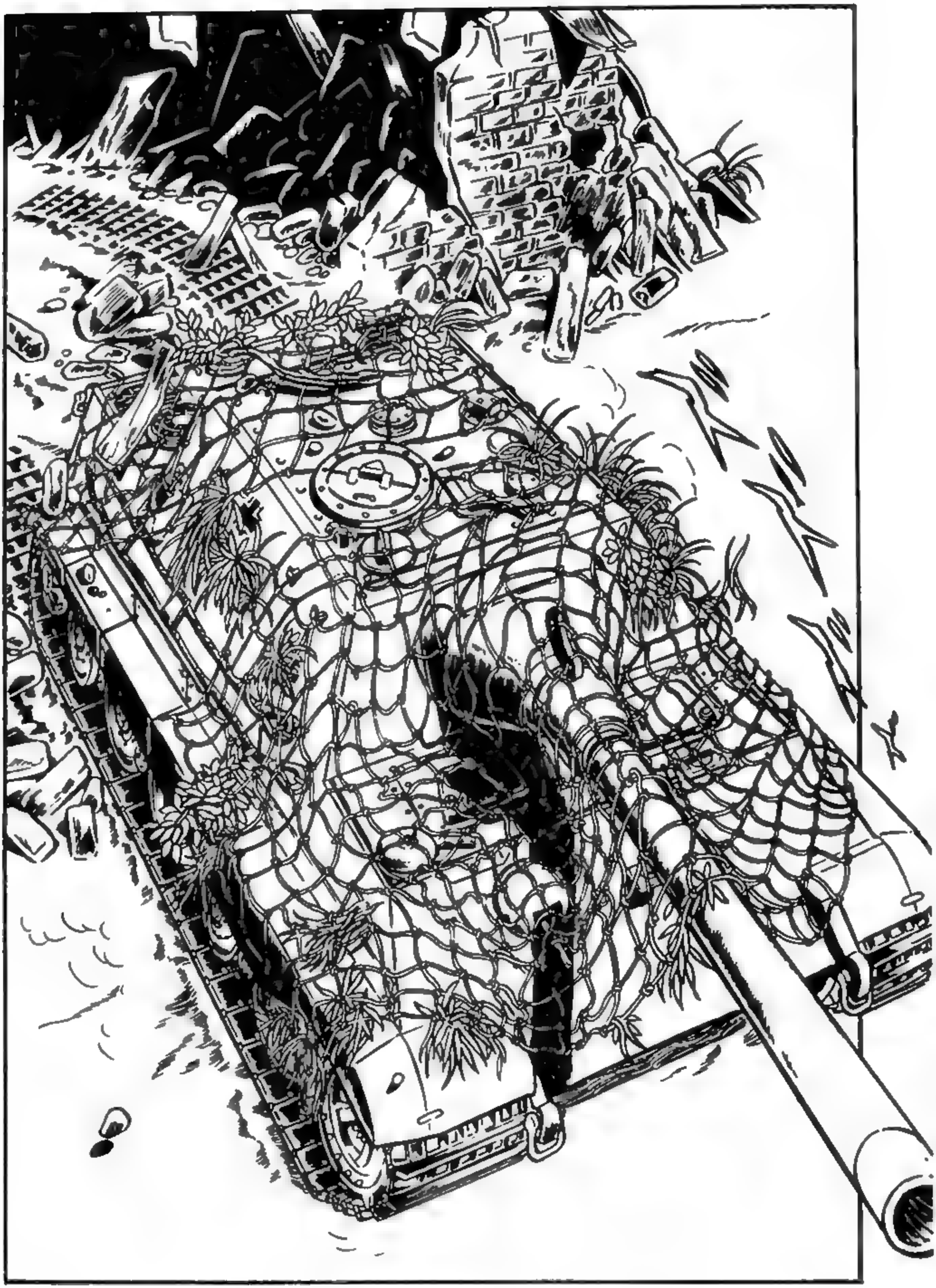
FIRE!!!

READY WHEN YOU ARE!

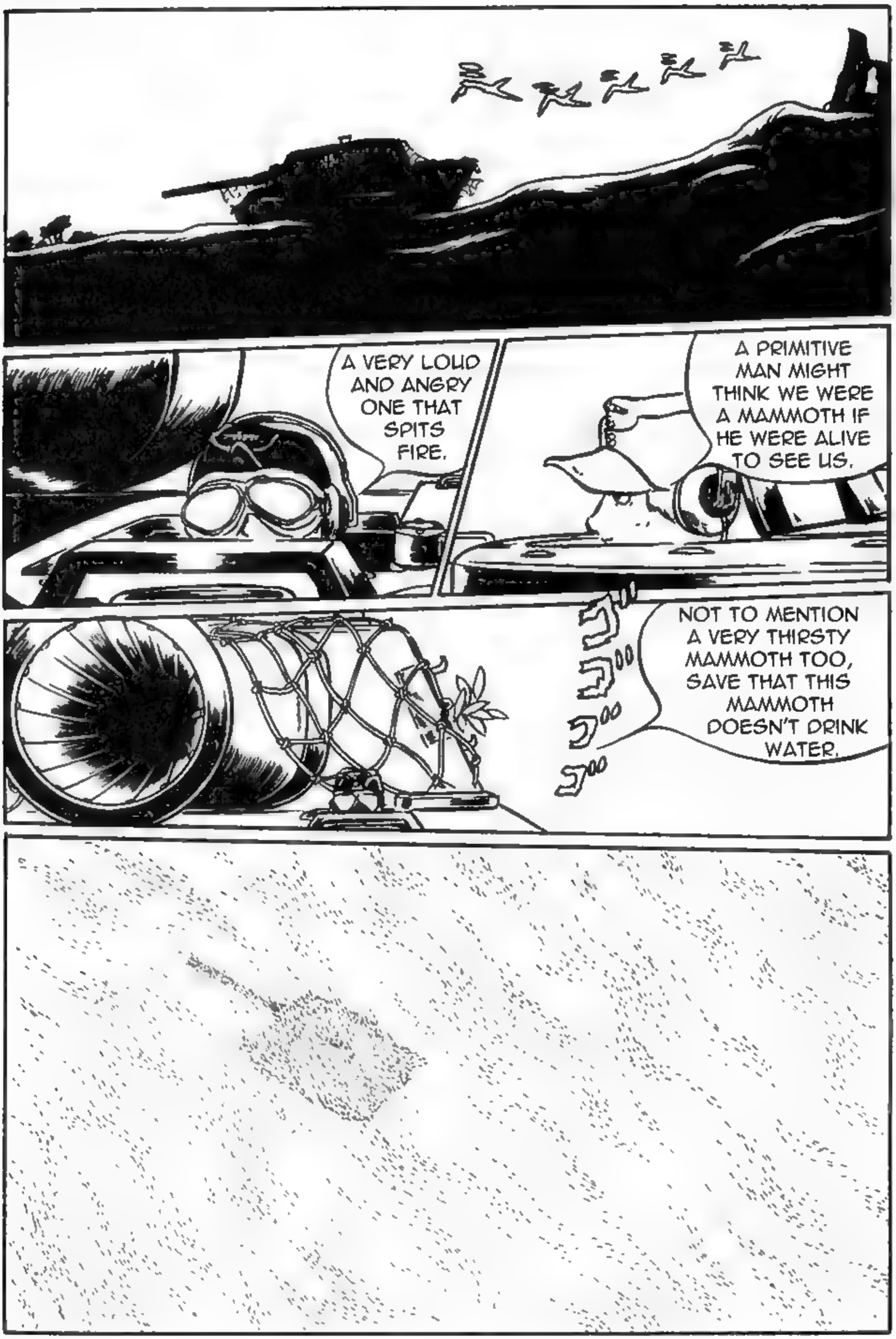
MOVING OUT!!!

THANKS, ELMEYER! NOW LET'S GO FIND NEW COVER!

GOOD SHOOTING, JAGER! NICELY DONE!



SILENT TIGER


A VERY LOUD AND ANGRY ONE THAT SPITS FIRE.
A PRIMITIVE MAN MIGHT THINK WE WERE A MAMMOTH IF HE WERE ALIVE TO SEE US.
NOT TO MENTION A VERY THIRSTY MAMMOTH TOO, SAVE THAT THIS MAMMOTH DOESN'T DRINK WATER.

WE'LL BE LEFT BEHIND BY THE REST.

THAT MEANS WE CAN'T MAKE IT BACK INSIDE OUR FINAL LINE OF DEFENSE.

'BOUT 3 KM WORTH, SIR.

HOW MUCH FUEL DO WE HAVE LEFT?

YOU'VE GOT A POINT.

WE'RE STILL ON GERMAN SOIL, ELMEYER. THAT'S ENOUGH FOR ME.

THAT'S RIGHT! WE KNOW EVERY PLACE WE CAN HIDE AND THEY DON'T. WE'LL KEEP THEM GUESSING FOR A LONG TIME.

AND WE GREW UP IN THESE WOODS.

HEY, DO YOU REMEMBER CUTTING UP THAT TREE OVER THERE, JAGER?

WHAT'S LEFT OF THAT TREE NEXT TO IT IS YOURS. CAN'T YOU TELL?

WE'D PLAY AT CAVEMAN, AND COPS AND ROBBERS, AND ALL SORTS OF THINGS.

REMEMBER HOW WE USED TO PLAY IN THESE WOODS WHEN WE WERE KIDS, AND THEN HAVE FUN WITH OUR GIRLFRIEND IN HERE ONCE WE GOT OLDER?

OF COURSE IN YOUR CASE I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS GOOD OR BAD.

AND NOW WE'RE BOTH TANK CREWMEN IN THE WEHRMACHT PANZER CORPS. I'D SAY IT WORKED OUT.

I WAS ABOUT TO SUGGEST THE SAME THING!

HEY! I'VE GOT AN IDEA! LET'S GO TO HESSELHORN'S HOUSE WHILE WE'RE HERE.

ELLE HASSELHORN. SHE WAS ALWAYS THERE. SHE PLAYED WITH US, AND AS WE GOT OLDER SHE LOVED US ....

MAYBE ELLE WILL STILL BE HERE ... AHH, OUR ETERNAL GODDESS.

VVVV

I'M SURE SHE AND HER FAMILY WERE EVACUATED LONG AGO, BUT LET'S GO THERE ANYWAY FOR MEMORIES' SAKE.

AT LEAST THE ROSES ARE STILL HERE. GOD, BUT DO THEY SMELL GOOD! THAT WAS HER THING, REMEMBER? SHE GREW THEM RIGHT HERE ....

NO!!!

VVVV

WHAT DO YOU THINK? FALLOUT FROM AN ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENT? MAYBE AREA BOMBING?

WHATEVER IT WAS, IT'S BEEN FAIRLY RECENT. I'D SAY TWO DAYS AGO, MAYBE THREE. SEE HOW FRESH SOME OF THE DAMAGE IS?

THERE'S ALSO SIGNS THAT THE AMERICANS HAVE BEEN HERE. SEE THOSE CIGARETTE BUTTS?

NO WAY TO TELL. WE'RE TOO LATE, WHATEVER IT WAS.

HEY, YOU DON'T THINK-- NO, IT CAN'T BE! SURELY THEY LEFT BEFORE ...

THESE NEW GRAVE MARKERS DON'T HAVE NAMES.

WHERE ARE YOU, ELLE?

I HOPE THE DEAD FORGIVE US FOR WHAT I'M GOING TO SUGGEST LET'S HIDE HERE, IN THE CEMETERY. IT'D BE THE ABSOLUTE LAST PLACE THOSE AMERICANS WOULD THINK TO LOOK FOR US.

THE DEAD WANT THE LIVING TO REMEMBER THEM.

MY GUESS IS THAT THERE WASN'T TIME TO INSCRIBE THEM. THAT'S WRONG IF YOU ASK ME.

FORGIVE US FOR CRUSHING YOUR MARKERS. MAYBE WE CAN AVENGE THE DEATHS YOU SO RECENTLY SUFFERED.

AND HERE'S WHERE WE'RE PROBABLY GOING TO STAY TOO. WE'RE JUST ABOUT OUT. WE'RE NOT GOING FAR WITHOUT MORE FUEL.

WELL, HERE WE ARE IN OUR IRON COFFIN WITH THE OTHER COFFINS.

BEST WE DON'T RISK A SEARCH UNTIL NIGHTFALL, JUST IN CASE THE AMERICANS SHOW UP.

YOU THINK MAYBE THERE'S SOME LEFT UP AT THE HOUSE, ELMEYER?

YOU KNOW, I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING THAT THE AMERICANS, THE BRITISH, OR THE FRENCH HAVE THAT CAN DEAL WITH OR DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST OUR JAGDTIGER. OUR ARMOR IS IMPENETRABLE, THEIR TIN SIDES ARE NOT.

AND SO WE WAIT, MY GOOD FRIEND.

OUR 128MM GUN CAN PUNCH THROUGH ANYTHING THEY HAVE. JUST LIKE EARLIER, WE'LL KILL THEM WITH ONE HIT.

ITS 128MM MAIN GUN WAS SO POWERFUL THAT IT COULD TAKE OUT A STANDARD M4 SHERMAN TANK AT 4,000 YARDS, AS WELL AS PUNCH THROUGH THE HEAVIEST SOVIET TANK'S ARMOR WITHOUT BREAKING A SWEAT. IT WAS TRULY A FEARSOME FOE ....

THE GERMAN JAGDTIGER. IT WAS THE MOST POWERFUL TRACKED FIGHTING VEHICLE OF THE WAR. NOTHING ELSE COULD OVERPOWER IT IN SINGLE COMBAT. NOTHING.

!!

DID YOU HEAR SOMETH--

OHMIGOD! ELLE!!

?

THEY GAVE THE ORDER TO EVACUATE, BUT I HAD TO COME BACK ... AND NOW I'M GLAD I DID.

I BROUGHT YOU TWO SOME FLOWERS. I HOPE YOU LIKE THEM. I PICKED THEM MYSELF.

IT CAN'T BE! ELLE! WHERE ... HOW ... !!

UHH ... WE'RE OUT OF FUEL.

SO WHY ARE YOU TWO PARKED IN OUR CEMETERY?

WHY DO YOU WANT US TO RUN, ELLE?

AS LONG AS WE'RE STILL CAPABLE WE HAVE TO FIGHT TO DEFEND OUR HOMELAND. IT'S THAT SIMPLE.

WE CAN'T DO THAT, ELLE. YOU KNOW THAT.

YOU KNOW THE AMERICANS ARE COMING. WHY DON'T YOU TWO RUN INTO THE WOODS AND SAVE YOURSELVES? I'LL WATCH THIS FOR YOU.

OH, YOU TWO ... I REMEMBER WHEN WE USED TO PLAY TOGETHER, AND LATER WHEN WE WOULD LOVE TOGETHER ...

... TO FULFILL THE MAD DREAMS OF A DEMON WHO IS REVILED AND HATED THE WORLD OVER, AND ONE WHO HAS BROUGHT SHAME AND RUIN ON US.

GERMANY IS LOST. DO YOU HAVE TO BE LOST WITH HER TOO? SO MANY HAVE DIED ....

MAYBE I AM.

ELLE ... THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU. IT'S AS IF YOU'RE SPEAKING FROM FAR AWAY.

HOWEVER, A GERMANY WHOSE HONOR HAS BEEN RESTORED, A GERMANY THAT STILL SEEKS THE BEST IN AND FOR HUMANITY INSTEAD OF WHAT IT IS NOW, THAT IS WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR ALL OF US IF WE WILL BUT REACH FOR IT.

I CAN SEE THE FUTURE NOW, AND IN THAT NAZI GERMANY HAS NO PLACE.

... IF YOU CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR THE PAST AND ALL THE DISHONOR FOR WHICH IT STANDS. TRUE HEROES CAN RISE ABOVE THAT. I CAN SEE THAT NOW. I WISH YOU COULD SEE IT TOO.

THERE IS NO TOMORROW, MY DEAR FRIENDS ...

I'M BEYOND ALL OF THAT NOW. I CAN SEE ALL OF IT - PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE - SO CLEARLY. I CAN SEE WHAT IS IN YOUR HEARTS, AND THIS IS NOT YOU. LET IT GO AND SAVE YOURSELVES. PLEASE.

ELLE ... WE ... WE HAVE A JOB TO DO.

ELLE! DON'T GO!! ELLE!!!

OH, THAT WON'T HAPPEN! YOU'LL SEE!

YOU TAKE CARE, ELLE, LEST AN AMERICAN SNIPER GETS YOU!

I UNDERSTAND. I'LL PICK SOME ROSES FOR BOTH OF YOU IN MEMORY OF THIS MEETING. IT WILL NOT BE OUR LAST.

SHE SAID THINGS THAT PEOPLE HAVEN'T DARED TO SAY IN GERMANY FOR YEARS, AND FOR WHICH THE FEW WHO DID WERE PUT TO DEATH.

BUT THE ROSES, AND THE WAY SHE TALKED. IT WAS SO ... UNREAL.

WE BOTH SAW HER.

WAS THAT A DREAM?

YEAH. I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.

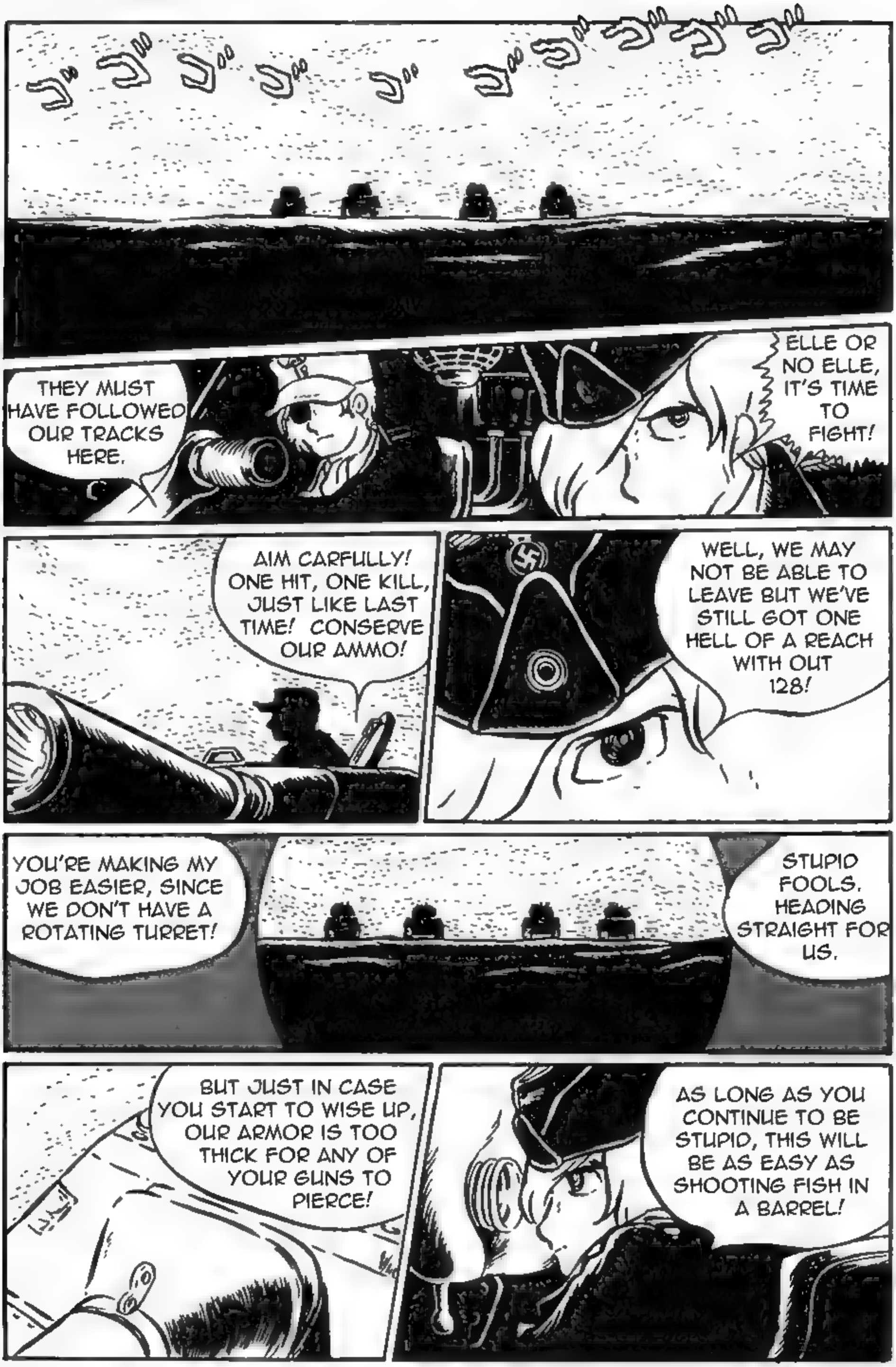
YOU KNOW, I GET THE STRANGEST FEELING THAT ELLE HASN'T LEFT ... THAT SHE'S STILL HERE ....

BUT WE BOTH SAW HER WALK OFF TOO! I DON'T KNOW.

BEHIND YOU!

LET'S GET READY TO DO BATTLE WITH THE AMERICANS.

A ROSE! BUT HOW DID THAT GET THERE?!


THEY MUST HAVE FOLLOWED OUR TRACKS HERE.
ELLE OR NO ELLE, IT'S TIME TO FIGHT!
AIM CARFULLY! ONE HIT, ONE KILL, JUST LIKE LAST TIME! CONSERVE OUR AMMO!
WELL, WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO LEAVE BUT WE'VE STILL GOT ONE HELL OF A REACH WITH OUT 128!
YOU'RE MAKING MY JOB EASIER, SINCE WE DON'T HAVE A ROTATING TURRET!
STUPID FOOLS. HEADING STRAIGHT FOR US.
BUT JUST IN CASE YOU START TO WISE UP, OUR ARMOR IS TOO THICK FOR ANY OF YOUR GUNS TO PIERCE!
AS LONG AS YOU CONTINUE TO BE STUPID, THIS WILL BE AS EASY AS SHOOTING FISH IN A BARREL!

I'M READY!

CLOSER ... CLOSER ... THAT'S IT ... COME WITHIN RANGE ....

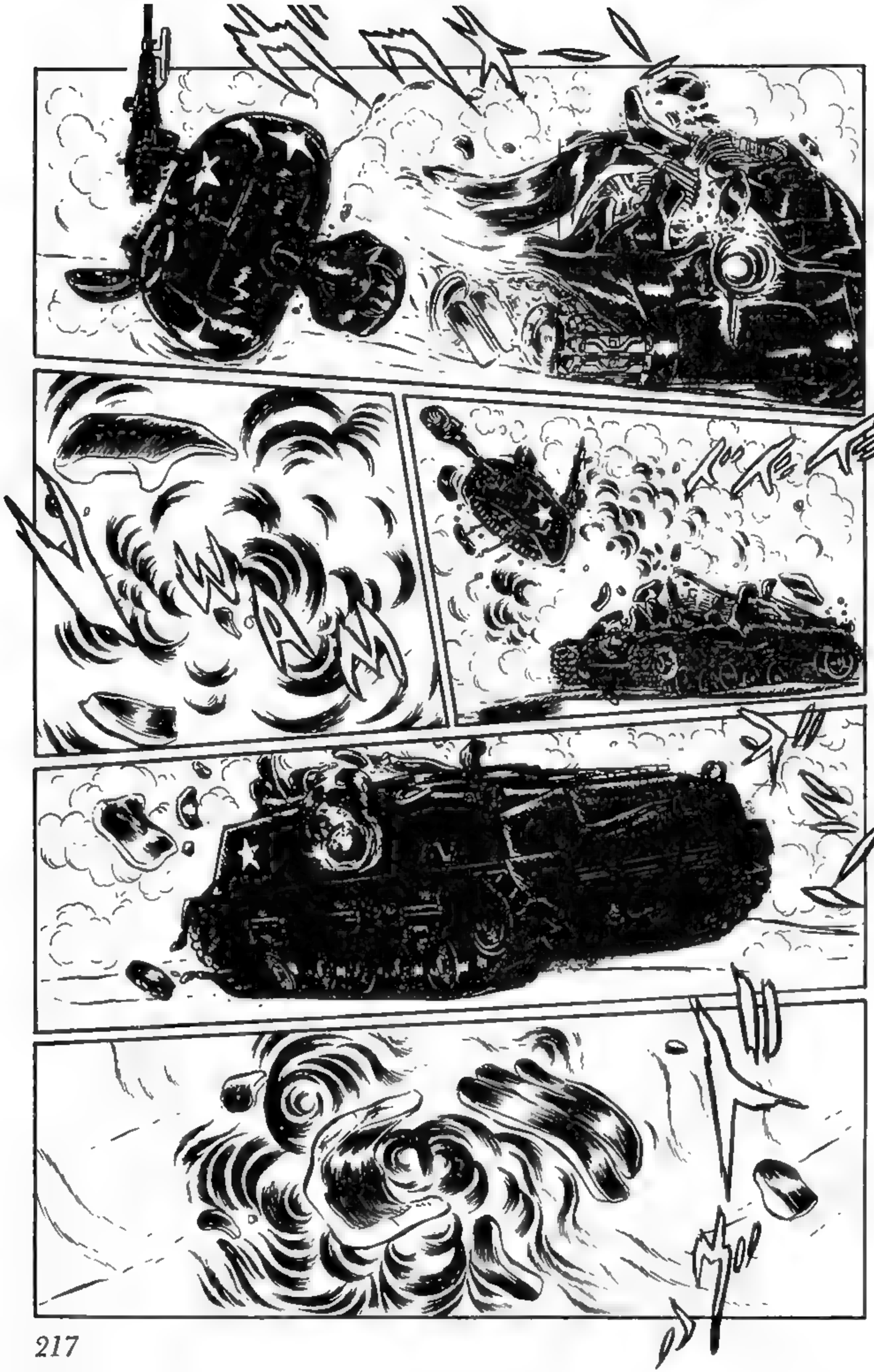
PLUS I SAVED ENOUGH FUEL TO TURN IF I HAVE TO. NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO, YANKS, YOU'RE SCREWED.

I'LL GIVE 'EM POINTS FOR BEING BRAVE -- OR MAYBE THAT'S FOOLHARDY.

I WONDER WHAT THE YANKS IN THAT LEAD TANK ARE THINKING?

ARE THEY DOING IT FOR THAT "BETTER WORLD" ELLE SPOKE OF?

DRIVING STRAIGHT INTO THEIR OWN DEATHS.



EVERYBODY SPREAD OUT!! MAKE HIM COME TO US!!!

HE DOESN'T HAVE A TURRET!

DAMN! THEY'RE SPREADING OUT!! WE'VE GOT TO-- HEY! WHAT'S WRONG?!?!

HERE THEY COME!

AWW, SHIT!

WE'RE STUCK ON SOME BROKEN GRAVE MARKERS! WE CAN'T MOVE!!

THEY'RE SO SPREAD OUT NOW THAT WE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO GET THEM ALL, EVEN IF WE COULD GET UNSTUCK! AND IF THEY GET IN CLOSE THEY MIGHT PIERCE OUR ARMOR!

OH SHIT!

EVERYBODY KEEP MOVING! TRACK IT WITH TURRET FIRE AND CONCENTRATE ON ITS SIDES, WHERE ITS ARMOR IS WEAK!

BEST OF ALL, IT'S STUCK FAST IN A CEMETERY!

TELL H.Q. IT ISN'T A WESPE BUT ONE OF THOSE "JAGDTIGER" THINGS!

JUST REMEMBER WE'RE GOING TO DIE HAVING DONE OUR BEST!

YEAH ... I THINK SO. LOOKS LIKE THE GROUND COLLAPSED BENEATH US! THIS CEMETERY MUST HAVE HAD A VAULT BENEATH IT!

WH ... WHAT HAPPENED? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

... THEN THERE'S PROBABLY A WAY UP TO THE SURFACE IN THERE. LET'S HOPE IT HASN'T COLLAPSED TOO!

YOU KNOW, IF WE'VE FALLEN INTO AN OLD VAULT ...

OUR EXCESSIVE WEIGHT PLUS ALL OF THAT ENEMY FIRE, I'M GUESSING.

BUT HOW?!

WHICH MEANS THE EXIT WILL BE AT THEIR HOUSE! ASSUMING IT'S NOT BURIED UNDER ALL THAT RUBBLE! WE CAN WAIT UNTIL THE AMERICANS LEAVE AND ESCAPE!

HEY! I'LL BET IT'S THE HASSELHORN FAMILY VAULT!

THAT'S BETTER.

LOOKS LIKE WE LANDED ON THE FLOOR OF THAT OLD VAULT! THERE'S SOMETHING BETWEEN OUR TRACKS. GIMME A LIGHT!

I'LL TAKE A LOOK.

ASSUMING OUR ESCAPE HATCH IS STILL CLEAR.

NO... ELLE!!!

LET ME SEE!

WHAT IS IT?

OH MY GOD ...! THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE ... ... !!

OH MY GOD ... NO, NO, *NO!!!*

REMEMBER, SHE SAID SHE'D SEE US AGAIN SOON.

MAYBE SHE WAS ALLOWED TO COME BACK THAT ONE LAST TIME FOR OUR SAKES, TO GIVE US ONE LAST CHANCE ON WHICH WE PASSED.

BUT IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN HOW DID SHE COME AND SEE US BOTH TODAY?! I DIDN'T IMAGINE IT AND I KNOW YOU DIDN'T EITHER!

SHE MUST HAVE DIED IN THE ATTACK ON HER HOME. HER FAMILY BURIED HER IN THE VAULT, FILLED IT FULL OF HER FAVORITE ROSES, AND THEN LEFT OR WERE TAKEN AWAY. THAT WAS TWO OR THREE DAYS AGO!

THIS IS WHERE THE THREE OF US GREW UP, PLAYED, LOVED ... AND SOON ENOUGH DIED.

THEY WANTED TO DIE WITH THEIR TANK, SO LET 'EM!

THAT AIN'T GOIN' ANY-WHERE!

FORGET IT! LET'S GO!

THAT'S A WOMAN'S VOICE!

COME. IT'S TIME WE SHOULD BE GOING.

I'M GLAD WE COULD BE TOGETHER IN THE END, JUST AS IN OUR YOUTH OF OLD.

WHEN ALLIED FORCES RETURNED A FEW DAYS LATER, THE JAGDTIGER WAS COVERED IN NEW GROWN ROSES. HOW THEY GREW SO FAST NO ONE KNEW.

JUST AS THE GREAT WOOLY MAMMOTHS OF OLD SUCCUMBED TO THEIR EVENTUAL FATES, SO TOO DID THAT MIGHTY GERMAN JAGDTIGER ON THAT DARK DAY ...

IN A VERY REAL SENSE IT WAS DEAD.

STUPID KRAUTS ....

EVENTUALLY, AFTER MANY YEARS, THE DECISION WAS MADE TO UNEARTH THAT OLD JAGDTIGER AND PUT IT IN A MUSEUM, BEING ONE OF THE VERY FEW OF ITS KIND LEFT.

INSIDE, HOWEVER, INSTEAD OF THE REMAINS OF ITS CREW, THEY FOUND IT FULL OF FRESH ROSES.

THE SAME WAS TRUE FOR THE OLD BUT EMPTY BURIAL VAULT IT HAD FALLEN INTO.

THE AUTHORITIES WERE OF COURSE BAFFLED AND WILL NOT TALK ABOUT IT, BUT A LEGEND HAS GROWN AMONG THE LOCALS.

THEY SAY THAT THE SPIRITS OF ELLE, JAGER, AND ELMEYER DID FIND PEACE AND HAVE BEEN REUNITED ONCE AGAIN FOR ALL ETERNITY.

DAS ENDE

SILENT TIGER Published in Weekly Shonen Sunday, issue 27, 1977.

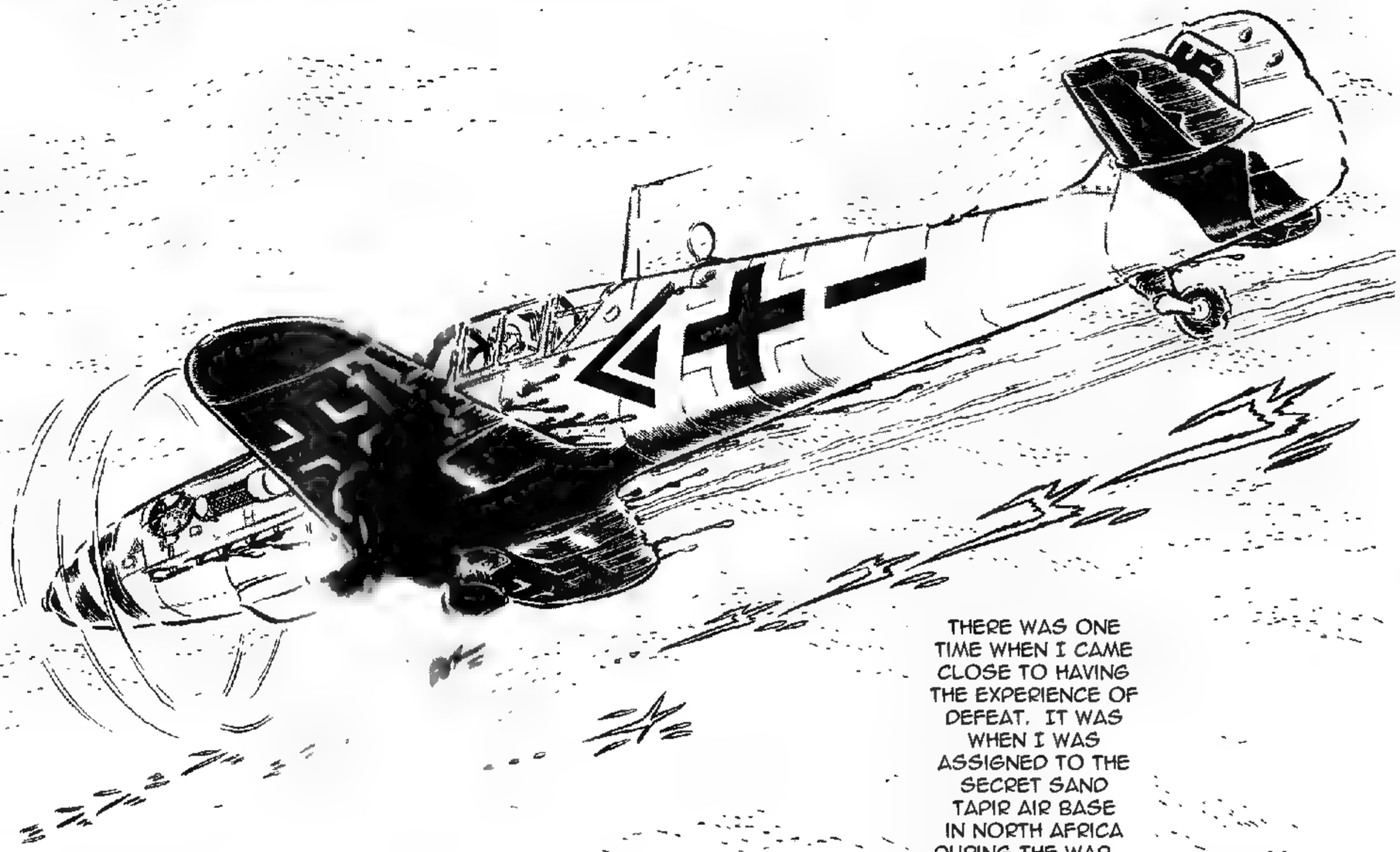
LEIJI
MATSUMOTO
PRESENTS

THE COCKPIT

MY NAME IS WALTER VON MAUSER. I AM A MAN WHO HAS NEVER BEEN DEFEATED IN THE AIR.

THE LUFTWAFFE, FOR WHICH I FLEW IN THE WAR, WAS EVENTUALLY DEFEATED. THAT SAID I HAVE NEVER BEEN DEFEATED IN THE AIR. I AM PROUD OF THAT, AND MY PRIDE IN THAT FACT HELPED ME TO SURVIVE THE WAR.

NIKE'S NECKLACE



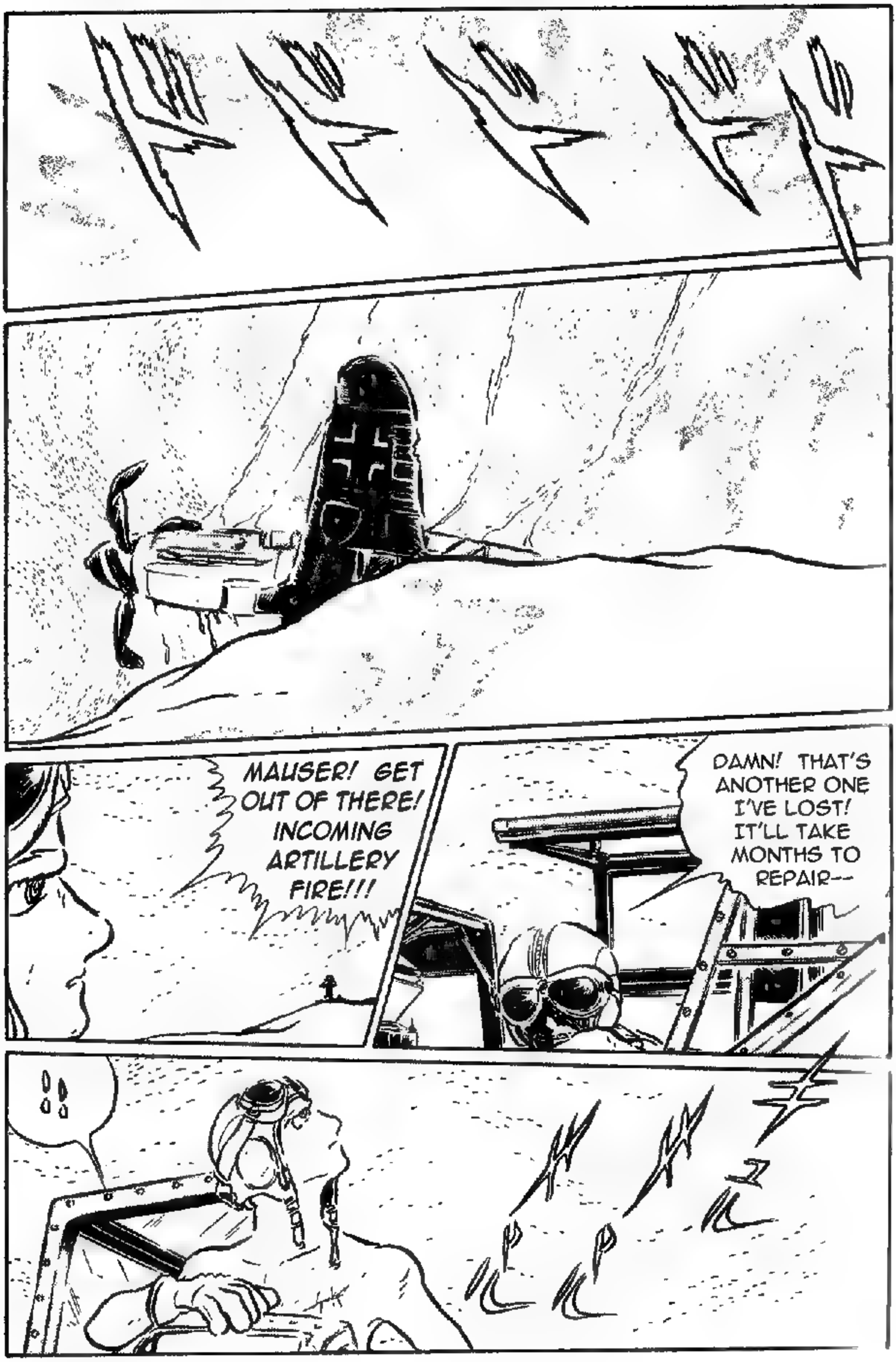
THERE WAS ONE TIME WHEN I CAME CLOSE TO HAVING THE EXPERIENCE OF DEFEAT. IT WAS WHEN I WAS ASSIGNED TO THE SECRET SAND TAPIR AIR BASE IN NORTH AFRICA DURING THE WAR ...

HE IS NOW BUT A DISTANT MEMORY. THE SANDS OF NORTH AFRICA LONG AGO CLAIMED HIS BONES.

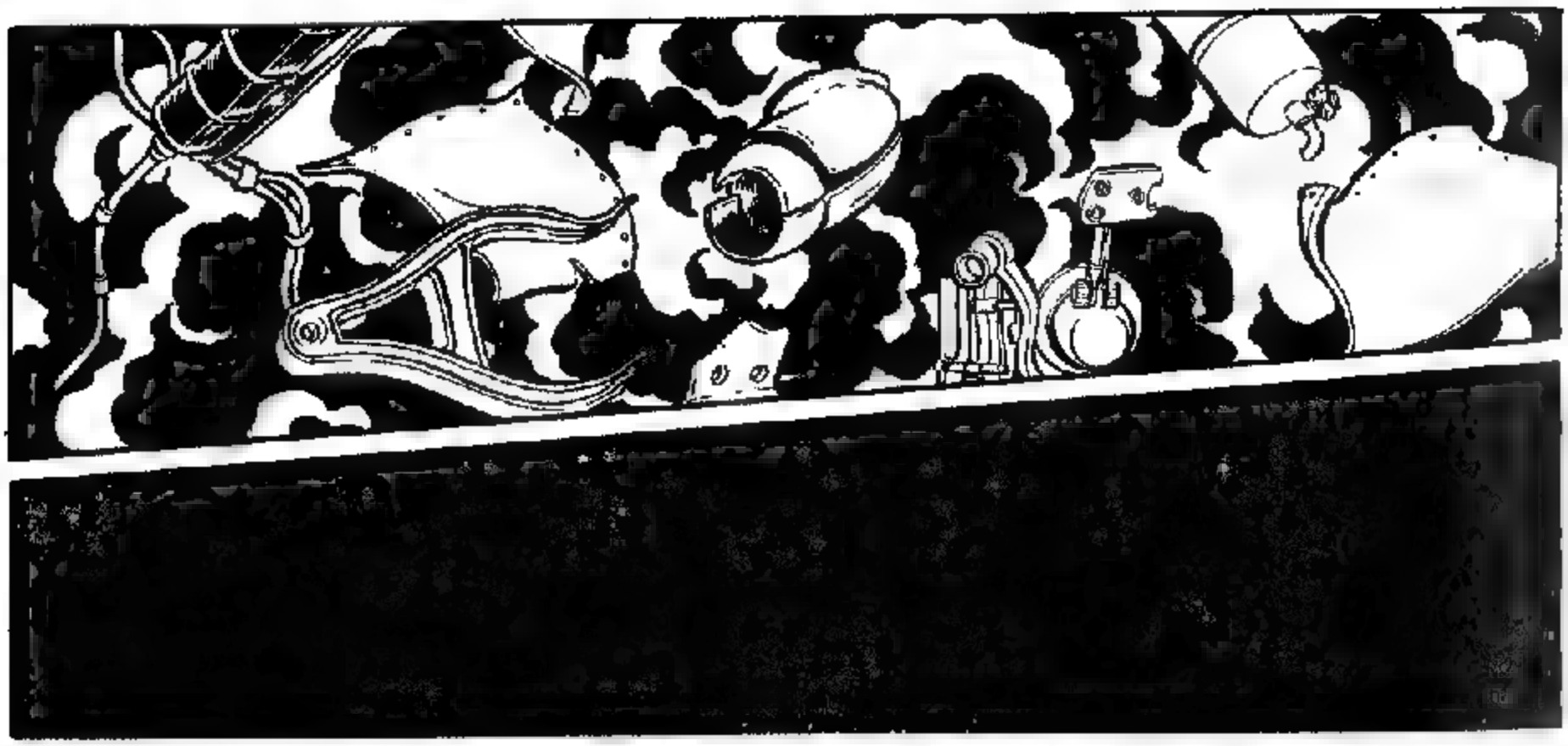
SAND TAPIR WOULD NOT HAVE EVEN EXISTED BUT FOR THAT MAN ....

FOR LACK OF PROPER SUPPORT FROM HOME WE HAD FALLEN FROM THE HEIGHTS OF VICTORY TO OUR SAD STATE. WE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING ANYMORE ....

I DON'T REMEMBER THE EXACT DATE OR MONTH, ONLY THAT THE ONCE VAUNTED AFRIKA CORPS WAS ON ITS LAST LEGS.


MAUSER! GET OUT OF THERE! INCOMING ARTILLERY FIRE!!!
DAMN! THAT'S ANOTHER ONE I'VE LOST! IT'LL TAKE MONTHS TO REPAIR--
!!

THEY HAD PLENTY OF SHELLS, OF COURSE. WE DIDN'T. THEY HAD AMERICAN FACTORIES MAKING THEM BY THE SHIPFUL. WE DIDN'T.
BY THAT TIME ALLIED FORCES IN NORTH AFRICA WERE ROUTINELY SHELLING ANY GERMAN PLANE THEY SPOTTED MAKING A LANDING OF ANY KIND.


HERR BRAUN! I'M SORRY, BUT I'VE LOST ANOTHER PLANE AS YOU SAW.
WELCOME BACK! I'M GLAD YOU'RE SAFE.
PLUS WE'VE ONLY GOT FUEL AND AMMO FOR A FEW MORE SORTIES.
IF ONLY WE HAD MORE PILOTS! YOU FIVE ARE ALL THAT'S LEFT. EH, MAUSER!
WE'RE STILL GOOD. I'VE GOT FIVE SPARE PLANES LEFT IF WE NEED THEM.

I SPEND ALMOST ALL MY TIME IN MY SHOP THESE DAYS. FIRST ONE PLANE AND THEN ANOTHER TO REPAIR.

BUT NEVER FORGET THAT PROVIDED WE DON'T GET BOMBED OR SOMETHING ELSE I STILL HAVE THOSE FIVE SPARE PLANES IF WE EVER NEED THEM.

IF THIS WAR EVER ENDS HE'S GONNA BUILD A ROCKET TO GO TO THE MOON!!

MY COUSIN IS FANTASTIC. HE'S A ROCKET MAN AT PEENEMUNDE. ME, I GET SENT OUT HERE.

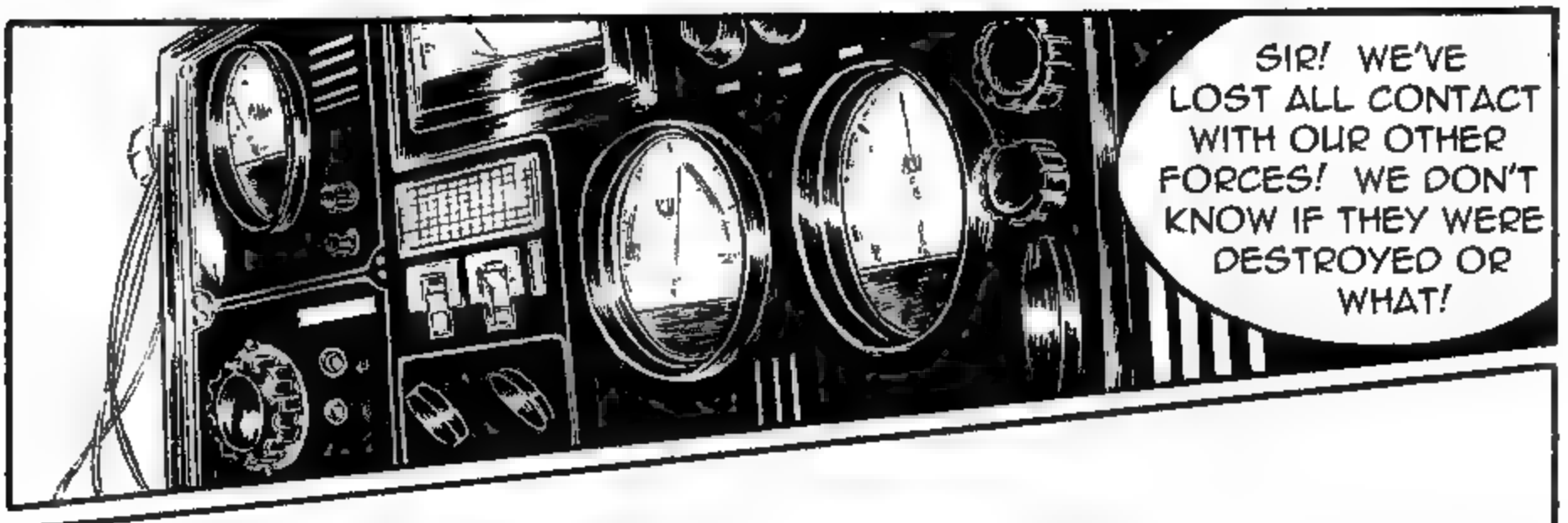
YOU'RE FANTASTIC. YOU KNOW THAT, HERR DOKTOR BRAUN?

IN THIS THEATER, YES. TOO MANY AMERICANS AND BRITISH WITH TOO MANY RESOURCES. THAT'S THE TRUTH.

HOW BAD? ARE WE GOING TO LOSE?

BAD.

MAUSER, BE HONEST. WHAT'S IT LIKE OUT THERE?


SIR! WE'VE LOST ALL CONTACT WITH OUR OTHER FORCES! WE DON'T KNOW IF THEY WERE DESTROYED OR WHAT!
WHICH MAKES SAND TAPIR A SMALL GERMAN ISLAND IN THE MIDDLE OF A VERY BIG DESERT, CUT OFF AND ALL ALONE.
IF HE'S REALLY GOT 'EM THEN I WANT 'EM WHILE WE STILL HAVE A WAR!
I'M TELLING YOU, I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANYMORE ABOUT THOSE "FIVE OTHER PLANES" OF HIS! MINE'S ALL BUT A FLYING WRECK!

... AND NOW WE'RE DOWN TO JUST FIVE REBUILT FIGHTERS.

WE ALSO HAD 300 TOP-OF-THE-LINE AIRCRAFT, AND MIXED TYPES TOO! BUT HE NEVER RESUPPLIED US ...

WHEN I CAME HERE AND HELPED SET THIS BASE UP, WE HAD 180 PEOPLE.

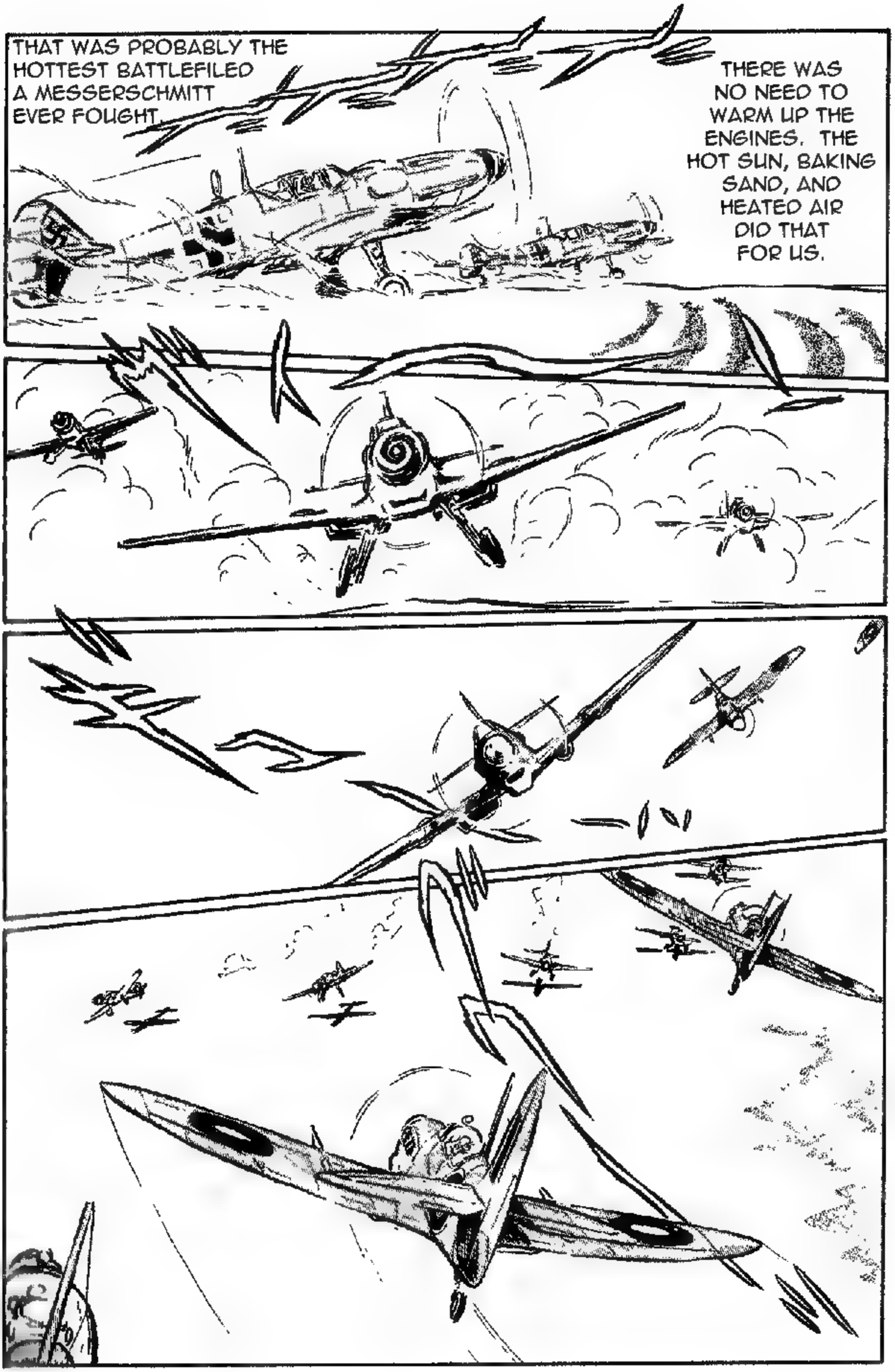
I'M TELLING YOU, MAUSER, WE'VE HIT ROCK BOTTOM. I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO NOW.

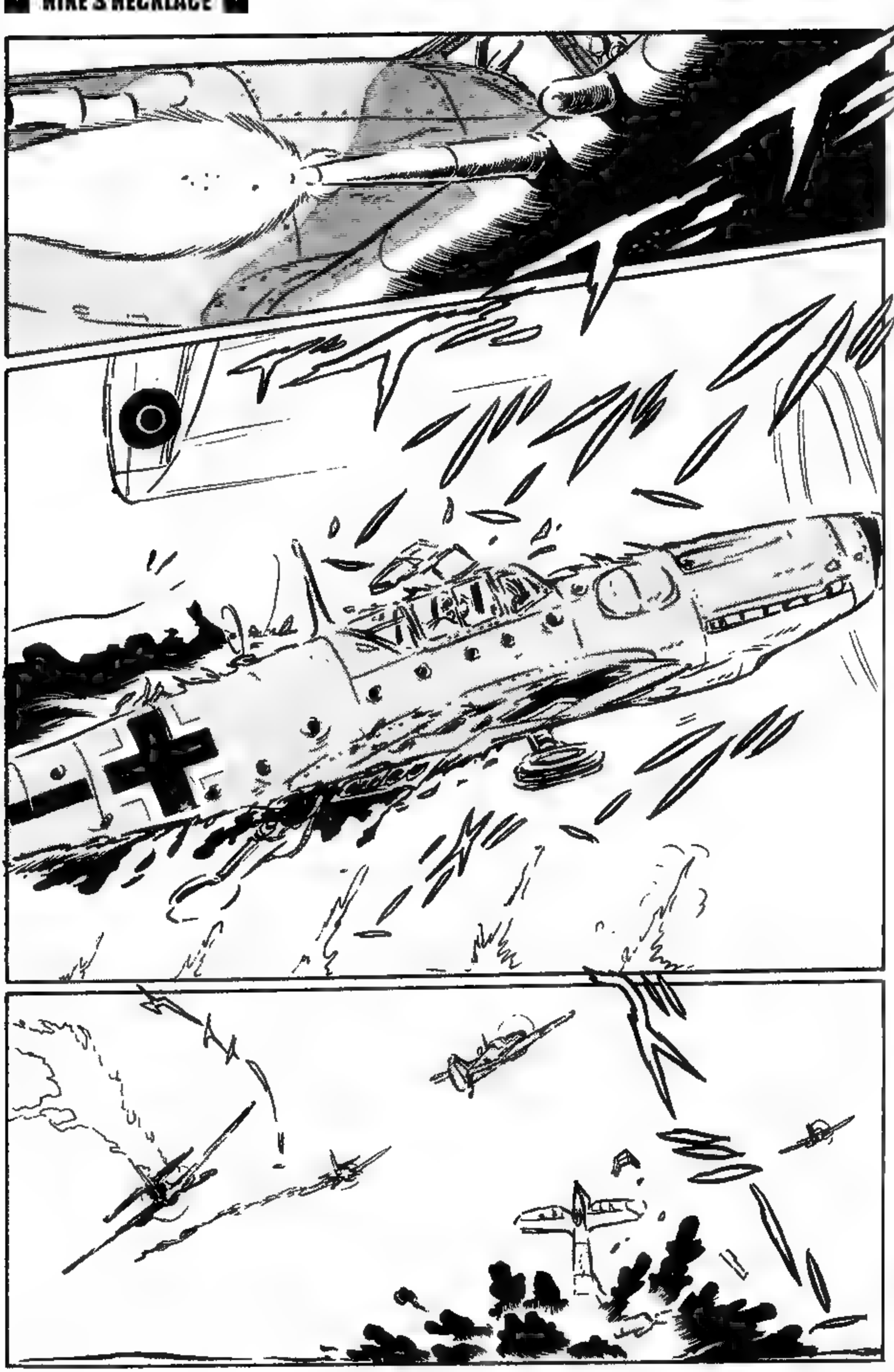
PLUS THE FIVE YOU'RE HOLDING AS SPARES, RIGHT?

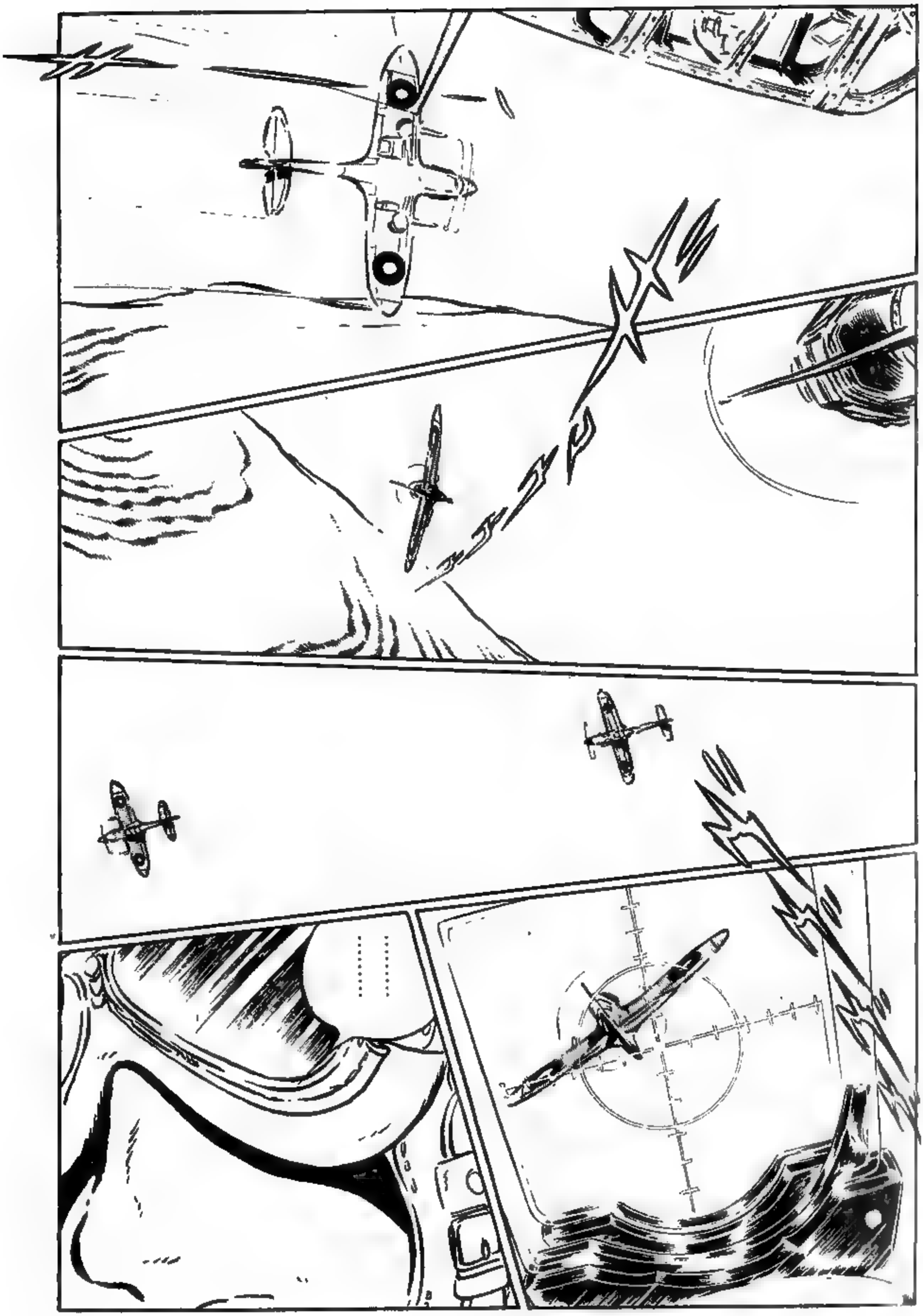
SPITFIRES! IT'S AN ATTACK ON OUR BASE!!!

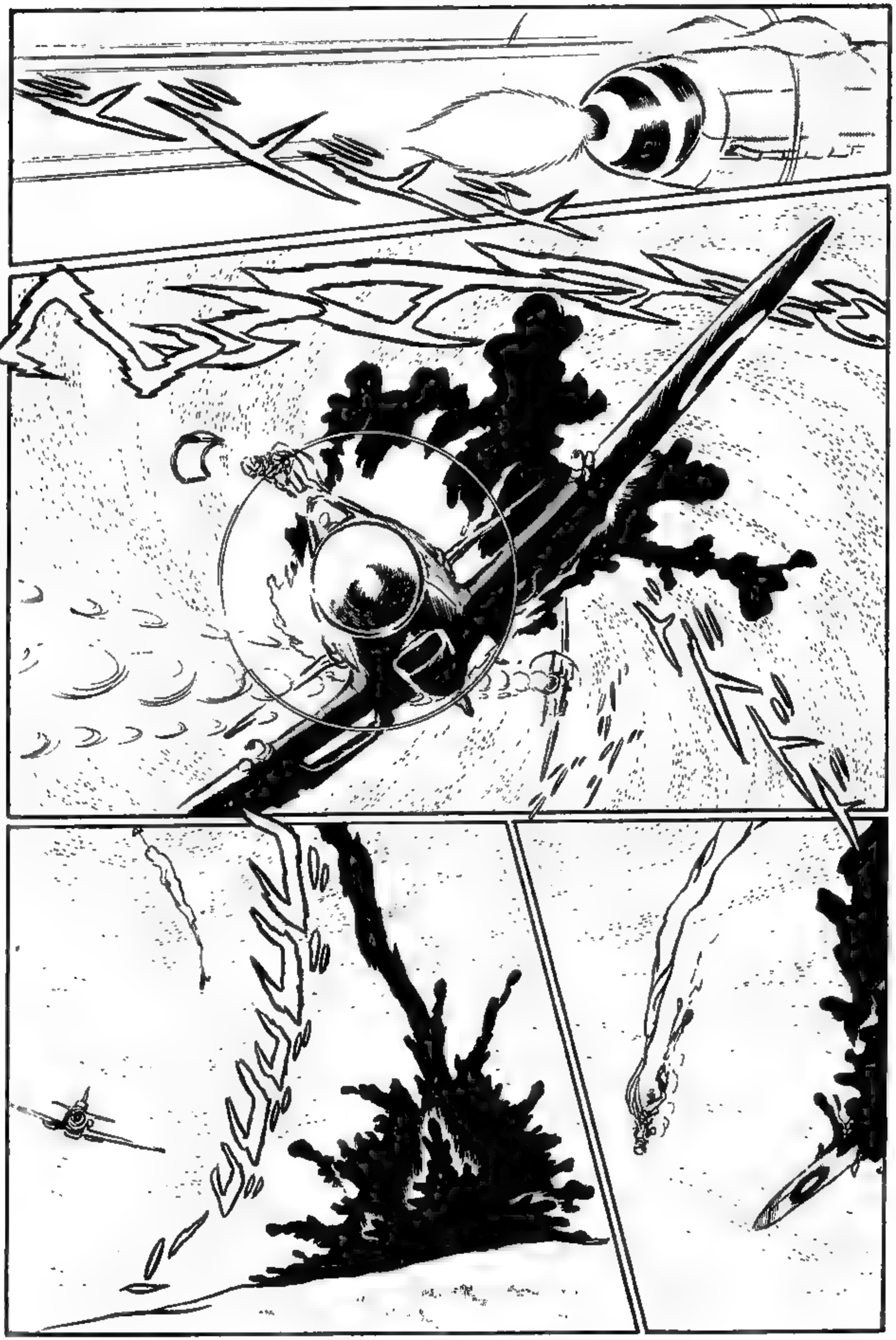
LET'S GO!

WE'VE GOT TO GET AIRBORNE! FOCUS ON THAT!! IGNORE EVERYTHING ELSE!!!!


THAT WAS PROBABLY THE HOTTEST BATTLEFILED A MESSERSCHMITT EVER FOUGHT.
THERE WAS NO NEED TO WARM UP THE ENGINES. THE HOT SUN, BAKING SAND, AND HEATED AIR DID THAT FOR US.







OH NO!

THEY DREW US OFF SO SAND TAPIR COULD BE BOMBED!

I THOUGHT ABOUT PUTTING THAT PILOT OUT OF HIS MERCY BUT CHANGED MY MIND. HIS CLOTHES WERE ON FIRE AND I'M NOT THAT CRUEL. I WONDERED WHEN HE'D FIGURE IT OUT.

EVERYONE ELSE MUST HAVE BEEN SHOT DOWN. IT'S JUST ME AND THAT BRITISH PILOT NOW.

HELLO, MISS. I'D OFFER YOU SOME--

YOUR ENGLISH IS EXCELLENT. MY FLIGHT SUIT CAUGHT FIRE AND I HAD TO SHUCK IT.

A NUDE WOMAN?

I SEE. WELL, ENGLANDER, NAME AND RANK.

I'M NOT ABOUT TO VOLUNTEER ANY INFORMATION, YOU NAZI SWINE. FIGURE IT OUT YOURSELF.

ALL RIGHT. LET'S SEE. YOUR DOG TAG'S I.D. NUMBER IS 0680997. THAT'S TOO LONG, SO YOU'RE "ZERO" TO ME FOR NOW.

YOUR FRIENDS DID A VERY GOOD JOB OF WRECKING THIS BASE, SEE?

BUT I'M YOUR PRISONER!

WHAT?!

YOUR BASE IS IN THAT DIRECTION, RIGHT? ALL RIGHT, DON'T AGREE, BUT IT'S A GOOD THING I ALREADY KNOW. *GO HOME.*

TOUCHÉ, MY CAPTOR.

AS FOR CLOTHES, WOULD YOU WANT TO WEAR THOSE OF A PIG?

I'VE GOT NO WAY TO HOLD YOU. I HAVE TO LET YOU GO.

WHY DID ALL OF YOU STAY HERE AND KEEP FIGHTING EVEN THOUGH YOU WEREN'T GETTING RESUPPLIED?

BEFORE I TRY TO MAKE IT BACK AS I AM, I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU A QUESTION.

... KNOWING THAT WE WERE ISOLATED AND CUT OFF? YOU COULD HAVE JUST BYPASSED US AND KEPT GOING.

I'LL ANSWER YOU QUESTION WITH ANOTHER. WHY DID YOU ATTACK US ...

IS THERE SOMETHING SPECIAL HERE YOU WANT?

THAT'S JUST THE SPARE ...

YOUR DR. BRAUN WAS UP TO SOMETHING

THE BUILDING'S OPEN NOW. WHY DON'T WE LOOK AND FIND OUT?

... BUT HE WOULDN'T LET ANY OF US SEE THEM! WHY?!

HE SAID WE HAD FIVE SPARE PLANES ...

WHAT'S THIS?! AND WHERE ARE THE SPARE PLANES?!

ONCE I WAS OLD ENOUGH ... AND HAD THE MONEY ... I HAD A PROFESSIONAL COPY MADE ... SO SHE'D BE WITH ME ALWAYS ...

... I ... I'VE ALWAYS LIKED THIS STATUE ... EVER SINCE I WAS A CHILD ... SAW IT IN A BOOK ... WANTED IT ... LOVED IT ... YES, LOVED IT ...

EXPLAIN, HERR DOKTOR!

... IT ... IT'S ... MY COPY ... OF THE ... FAMOUS ... NIKE OF SAMOTHRACE ... THE "WINGED GODDESS OF VICTORY" ...

... EVERY ... EVERY TIME ... I FELT LIKE GIVING UP ... WHEN I WANTED TO GO OUT IN THE SAND ... AND DIE ... THE SIGHT OF HER ... ALWAYS BROUGHT ME BACK ... BACK TO LIFE ...

... I ... I BROUGHT IT WITH ME ... ONCE I FOUND OUT ... I WAS BEING SENT TO ... TO THIS HELLHOLE ... SHE CAME WITH ME ...

ALL THAT TIME ALONE IN HERE! WHAT WAS IT, HERR DOKTOR BRAUN?! WHAT DID YOU REALLY DO IN HERE?!?! I WANT TO KNOW!!!!!

SO THERE NEVER WERE ANY SPARE PLANES! WHAT DID YOU DO IN HERE?! ANSWER ME!

... THE FACT ... THAT YOU STAND BEFORE ME NOW ... IS PROOF ... THAT YOUR HOPE ... KEPT YOU ... GOING ...

... I MADE ... ALL OF YOU ... BELIEVE ... THAT THERE WAS A WAY OUT ... THAT'S WHAT I BUILT IN HERE, MAUSER ... HOPE ....

... I ... I GAVE YOU HOPE, MAUSER ... I GAVE YOU HOPE.

BECAUSE YOU HAD

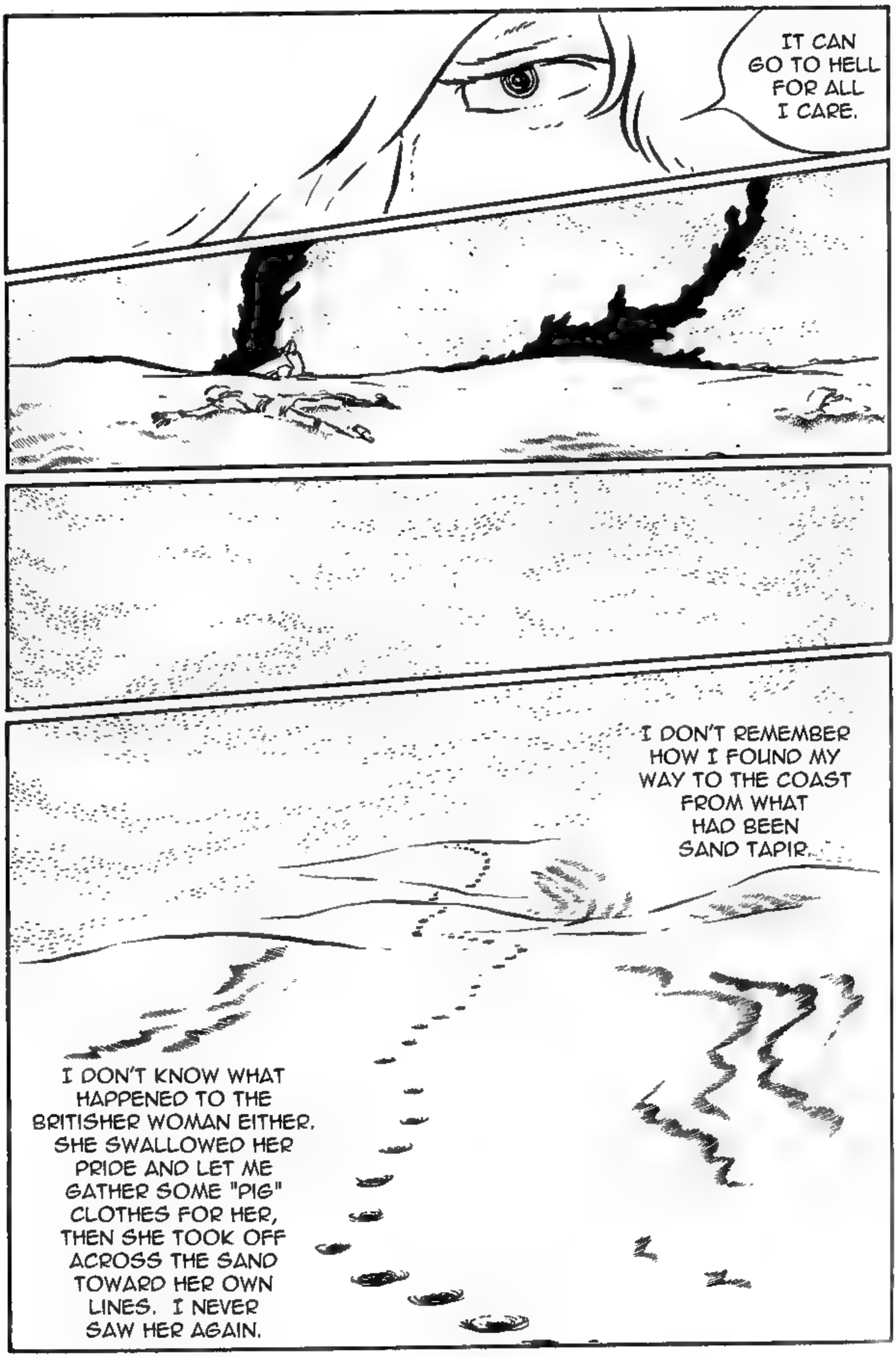
. YOU WERE THE ... BIGGEST ... AND BEST PEARL ... IN THE NECKLACE ... OF NIKE ... YOU ARE ALIVE ... TODAY BECAUSE ...

THERE'S BLOOD ON THAT NECKLACE. THE BLOOD OF BOTH OUR KINDS.

HE TRICKED US TOO.

"A PEARL IN NIKE'S NECKACE," HUH? THE ONLY PEARLS I SEE ARE BONES LITTERING THE SAND.

WHAT SHIT.


IT CAN GO TO HELL FOR ALL I CARE.
I DON'T REMEMBER HOW I FOUND MY WAY TO THE COAST FROM WHAT HAD BEEN SAND TAPIR...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BRITISHER WOMAN EITHER. SHE SWALLOWED HER PRIDE AND LET ME GATHER SOME "PIG" CLOTHES FOR HER, THEN SHE TOOK OFF ACROSS THE SAND TOWARD HER OWN LINES. I NEVER SAW HER AGAIN.

I CAN STILL SEE MY FINAL SIGHT OF SAND TAPIR AS CLEARLY IN MY MEMORY AS IF IT WERE YESTERDAY. I SEE THAT PROFESSIONALLY MADE COPY OF NIKE, THE WINGED GODDESS OF VICTORY, WITH HER WINGS SPREAD WIDE OVER THE SANDS THAT HELD HER NECKLACE OF BLOOD AND BONES. I TOO COULD HAVE BEEN PART OF THAT NECKLACE HAD I NOT GIVEN UP HOPE AND SURVIVED. THAT'S THE ONLY THING I'LL GRANT THE LATE HERR DOKTOR BRAUN.

MAY THEY NEVER FIND THAT SCHWINEHUND'S BONES.

DAS ENDE

< Published in Big Comic Original, November 5, 1978 >